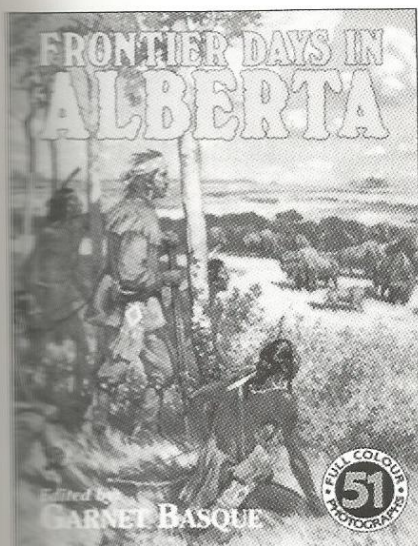


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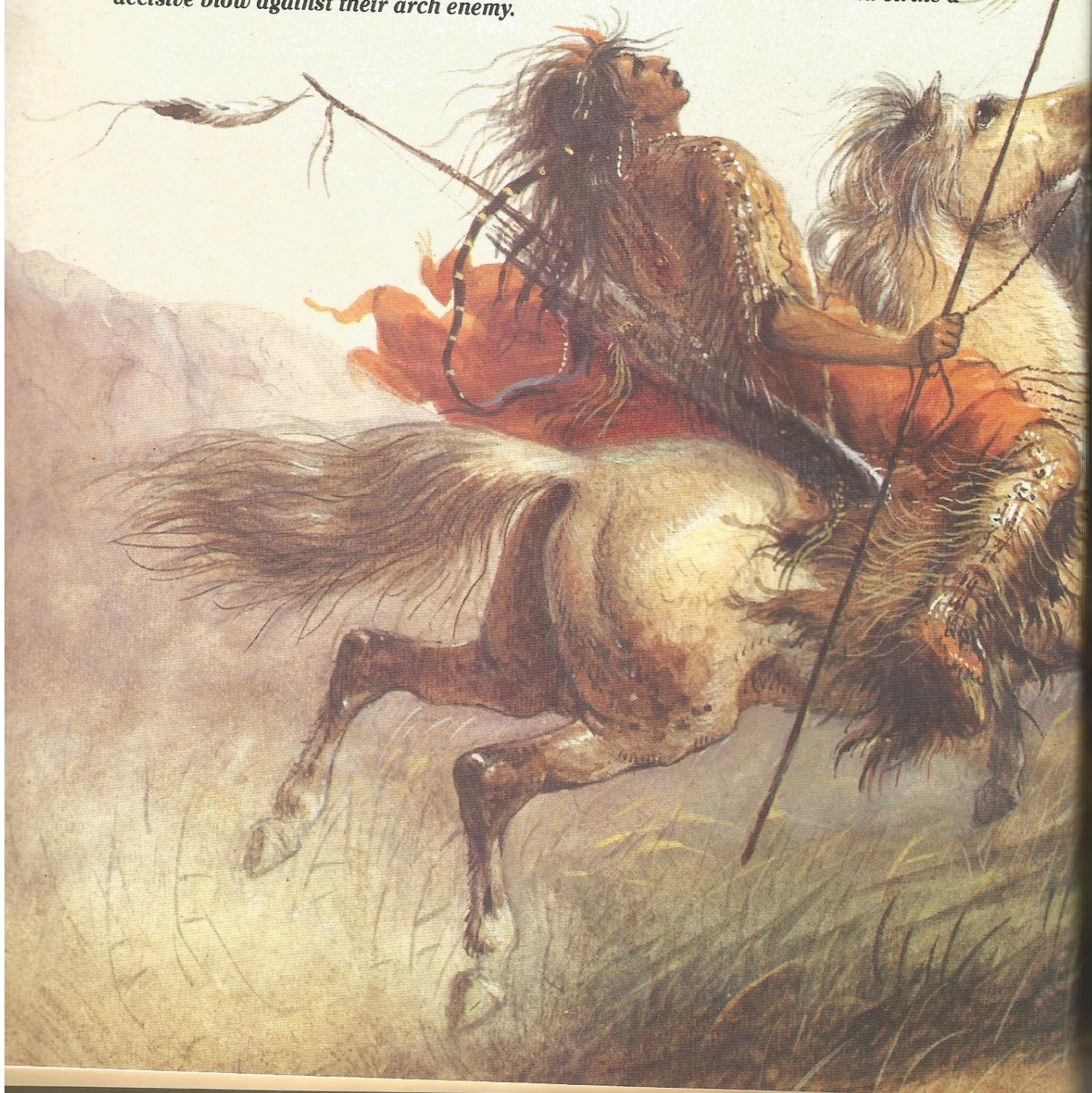
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The Last Great Indian Battle

The Blackfoot Confederacy, comprised of Blackfoot, Blood and Peigan tribes, was one of the most powerful and most feared alliances on the Canadian plains. In 1869-70, however, a deadly smallpox epidemic swept through their combined ranks and cut their strength in half. In the fall of 1870, a large war party of Cree and Assiniboine warriors decided to take advantage of the decimated Blackfoot Nation and strike a decisive blow against their arch enemy.



their chief Bull Back Fat, confiscated the whisky and drove Johnson and the other whites from Blackfoot territory. Instead of being grateful for being allowed to escape with his life, Johnson vowed to exact his revenge on the entire Blackfoot Nation.

That fall, when a steamer arrived at Fort Benton, Montana, with smallpox aboard, Johnson's twisted mind immediately saw an opportunity to get even. He eagerly purchased the infected blankets, packed them on two ponies, and started north for the Canadian plains. When Johnson reached the Milk River he saw six Indians riding down the valley. The Indians soon spotted Johnson and gave chase. Feigning alarm, Johnson abandoned the contaminate blankets and fled. The unsuspecting Indians must have considered themselves very lucky that day, for, not only had they obtained two horses, but a load of blankets as well.

As the infected blankets began to circulate among the Indians, the disease quickly spread with deadly effect. The older members of the tribes recognized the terrible plague that had wiped out almost two-thirds of the Blackfoot Confederacy in 1837, but they were powerless to stop it. By winter the epidemic was at its peak, and as Indians panicked and tried to flee the scourge, they spread the disease even further.

"Whole bands were caught on the trackless plains and perished in savage blizzards," wrote B.D. Fardy in *Jerry Potts: Paladin of the Plains*. "In the camps, relatives watched loved ones swell up like bloated carcasses, the stench of their sickness filling the teepees. Others looked on as the afflicted became disfigured or went into a raving delirium from which there was no recovery. Young braves killed themselves rather than face disfigurement. Fathers killed their wives and children then themselves to avoid the agony of the disease."

By the spring of 1869 the plague had run its course, but the once-mighty Blackfoot Confederacy had been badly decimated. It has been estimated that the Blackfoot lost

1,000 of its people, while its allies, the Bloods and Peigans, lost about 600 each. With its numbers cut in half, the severely weakened Blackfoot Nation was now a tempting target for the strong and unaffected Cree and Assiniboiné alliance, who viewed this as an opportune time to strike a decisive blow against their powerful enemy.

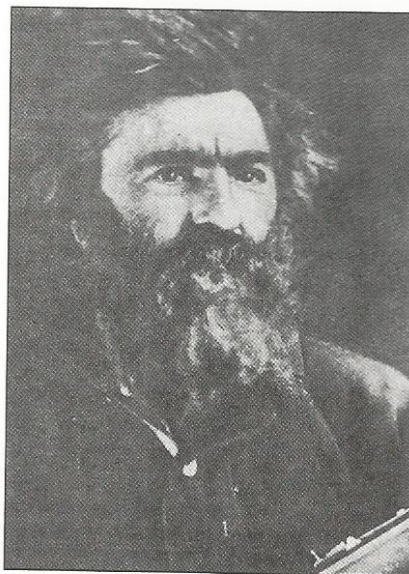
Dr. George A. Kennedy, the North West Mounted Police (NWMP) physician at Fort Macleod from 1879 to 1889, wrote an article on the subsequent battle which appeared in the *Lethbridge News* on April 30, 1890. Kennedy's report is probably based on an interview with one of the participants, Jerry Potts. According to Kennedy, late in the fall of 1870, a Cree and Assiniboiné war party numbering 600-800 warriors was assembled under chiefs Big Bear, Piapot, Little Mountain and Little Pine, and some lesser chiefs. Their destination was Blackfoot territory; their goal, to steal horses and other valuables, and to kill as many of their traditional enemy as they could.

The Blackfoot and Bloods were then camped mainly on the Belly River between Fort Kipp and Fort Whoop-Up, two notorious whisky trading posts about 20 miles apart.

Their allies, the South Peigans, were camped above Fort Whoop-Up, which was situated at the junction of the St. Mary's and Belly rivers, having been driven to this side of the border by Colonel Baker of the United States Army. Big Leg, Black Eagle and Heavy Shield were their chiefs. Crow Eagle led the North Peigans, while Bull Back Fat and Button Chief led the Bloods.

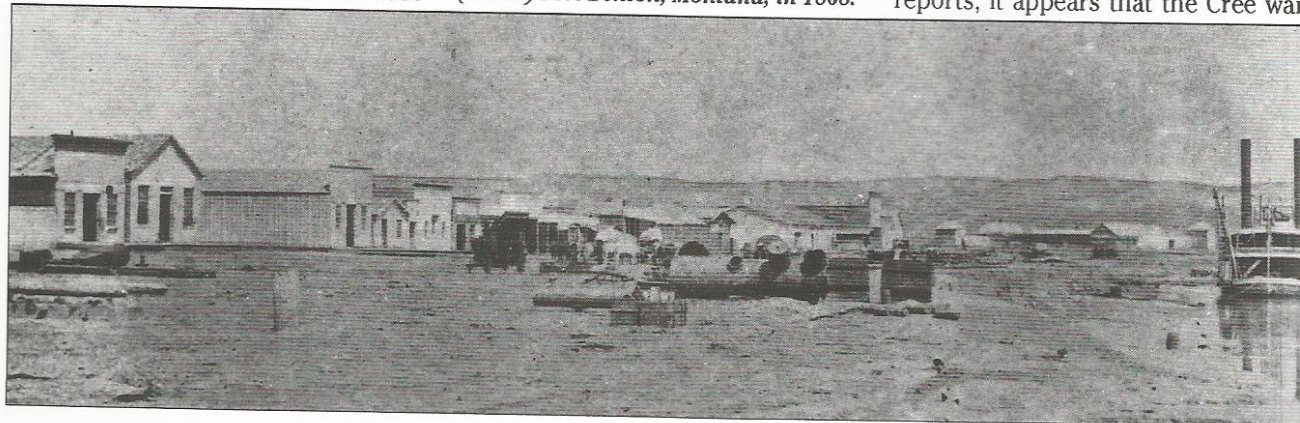
According to Kennedy's report, the South Peigan, because of their trade with the Americans, were the best armed of all the tribes. "The South Peigans were well armed with repeating rifles, needle guns and revolvers," wrote Kennedy, "the Bloods were not so well equipped, while the Crees and Assiniboines had only old muskets, Hudson Bay fukes, and bows and arrows to depend on."

From the various eyewitness reports, it appears that the Cree war



(Above) John "Liver-Eating" Johnson, the man accused of starting the smallpox epidemic.

(Below) Fort Benton, Montana, in 1868.



party followed the Bow River west from where Medicine Hat is today located, then turned south on the Little Bow River. When they reached a point about 18 miles northeast of what is today the City of Lethbridge, Chief Piapot had a vivid dream one night that seemed to predict disaster for the raiders. Iron Horn, only 10 years old at the time, participated in the expedition against the Blackfoot. Years later he related the war council he witnessed between Chief Piapot and his men to Mike Mountain Horse, who recorded it in an unpublished manuscript entitled "Indians of the Western Plains."

On the morning following his dream, Piapot assembled his warriors and gave them this ominous warning. "My children, I had a dream last night. I saw a buffalo bull with iron horns goring, stamping and killing us. We were unable to destroy it. After long meditation, I have come to the conclusion that we must abandon this venture and return home, otherwise misfortune awaits us."

Piapot's words had the effect of dividing the war party. The more superstitious among them decided to return home, while the remaining braves were persuaded to continue their war expedition by an opposing chief who harangued: "My children, don't believe in a dream. Advance and capture the Blackfoot Nation, women and children. The smallpox killed off most of their fighters, so we won't be opposed by any great number."

Of the approximately 300-400 that decided to continue, a reconnoitring party of scouts was sent ahead. "These scouts were always the most essential part of any Indian war party going into hostile country," related Mountain Horse. "Able-bodied young men were allotted to this special task which comprised investigating the country ahead, locating enemy camps, hunting parties or any hostile enemy scouts."

"On this occasion the Cree scouts discovered a Blackfoot camp at Many Ghosts, known in the old days as Fort Whoop-up, a trading post. Thinking to kill two birds with one stone they captured some of the Blackfoot ponies and reported back to the main camp. In reality, these men only located the central part of a large camp which extended to what is now Whitney's Crossing, south of Whoop-up, and as far north as Fort Kipp."

One night in late October (Kennedy gives the date as October 25), the entire Cree war party descended upon the small camp of about 60 teepees that had been located by the scouts about three miles north of Fort Whoop-

Up. Deploying for action under cover of darkness, the Crees began the assault on the sleeping camp. As the battle began, some of the Blackfoot women swam across the river and headed for the main camps to summon aid. Apparently one of these women showed incredible bravery and fighting ability by killing four Cree braves with a tomahawk during the initial engagements.

"Although outnumbered," related Mountain Horse, "the Blackfeet held their own, due chiefly to the modern firearms which they used. The noise of rifle fire, and the howling of dogs, soon brought assistance to the isolated Blackfeet. At break of day, warriors from the Blackfoot camps, north and south, could be seen approaching, on horseback, in twos and threes, over hills and knolls, chanting their war songs in joyful anticipation of battle."

One of the approaching defenders was 22-year-old Mountain Chief. His camp, located just north of the battle scene, was just getting up in the morning when news arrived that the lower camp was under attack. Mountain Chief mounted his best horse and, with other warriors, headed to the assistance of the lower camp. His account of the battle was published in Joseph Dixon's *The Vanishing Race: The Last Great Indian Council*, in 1913.

"We rode over a ridge while on the plain below the battle was raging. As we rode down the hill slope, I began to sing my war song. I carried a shield in my hand and this song that I sung belonged to that shield. One of the medicine men dreamed that whoever held this shield would not be hit by bullets. While singing, I put in the words, 'My body will be lying on the plains.'"

"When I reached the line of battle I did not stop but rode right in among the Crees and they were shooting at me from behind and in front. When I rode back the same way, the men made a break for the coulees. As soon as they got to the coulees they dug a pit. I was lying about ten yards away on the side of the hill. I was singing while lying there. I could not hear for the roar of the guns, and could not see for the smoke."

The first streaks of dawn had barely begun to show in the eastern sky before the Blackfoot reinforcements started to arrive. Now outnumbered, the Cree initiated a slow retreat across the prairie towards the Belly River. When they reached a coulee near the riverbank, they took up defensive positions. The Blackfoot, after much difficulty, succeeded in establishing themselves in a shorter coulee to the south.

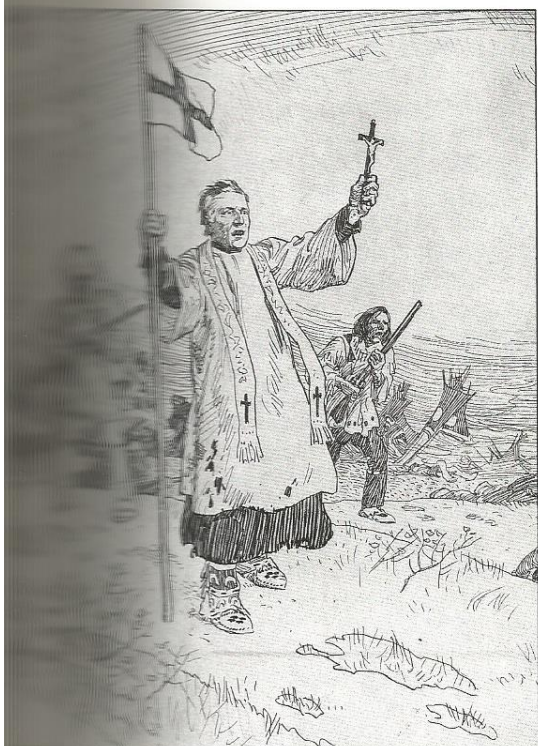


Chief Piapot of the Cree. When he informed his warriors about his dream, half of them returned home.



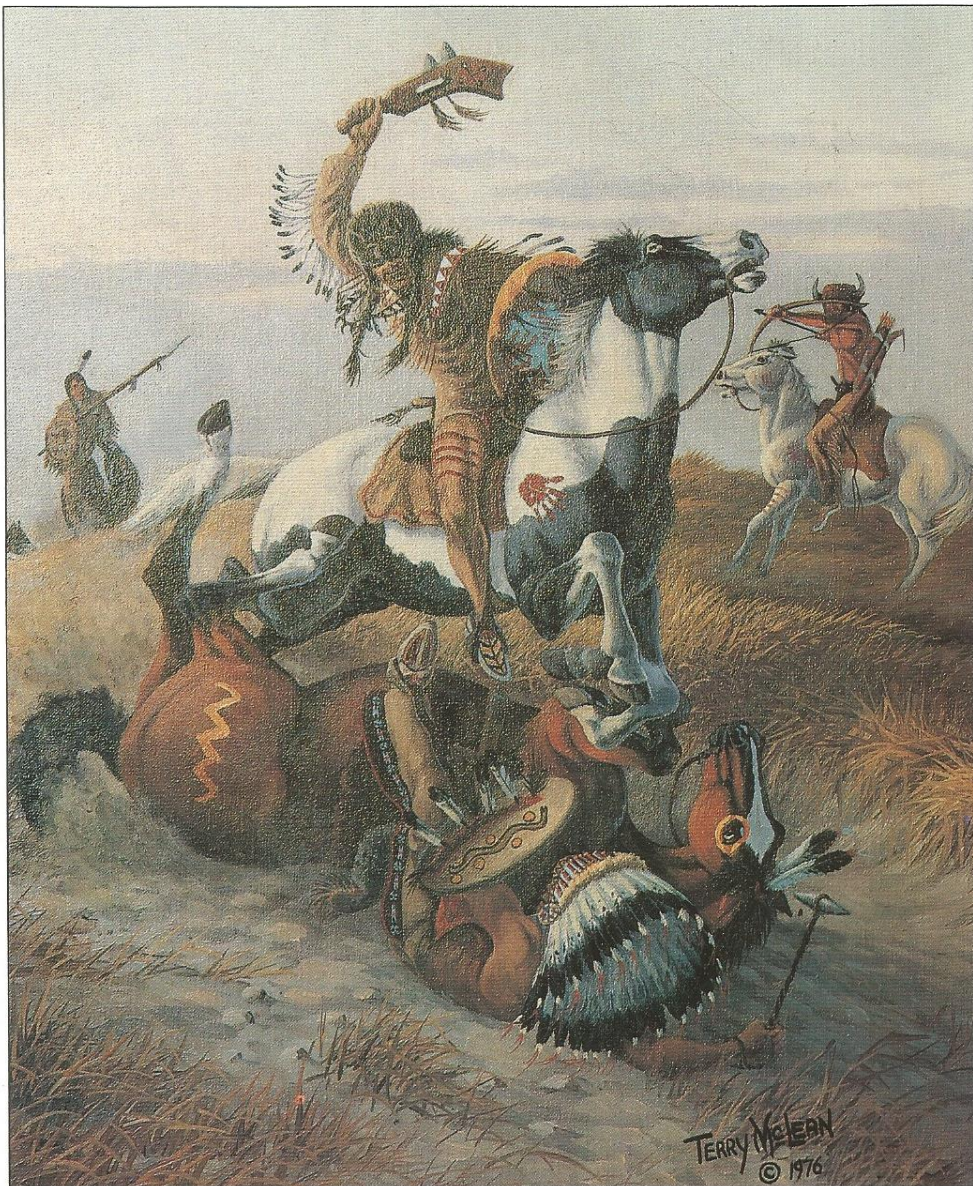
These two paintings by A.J. Miller depict scenes of the numerous Indian wars and raids. The top painting depicts a battle in progress, while the painting below shows one of the combatants beating a retreat.





(Above) In an earlier battle between the Blackfoot and the Cree, Father Lacombe, who tried to stop the fighting, was wounded and left for dead. Long afterward he recalled that: "The groans of the dying, the yelling of the warriors, the harangues of the chiefs, and the noise of the dogs and horses, all mingled, formed a kind of hell."

(Right) A rendering of the Last Great Indian Battle by Manitoba artist Terry McLean.



The Crees held the best position, and for some time the general fighting took place between these two coulees. The coulees were parallel, 300 to 400 feet wide, and divided by a ridge that varied in width from 75 to 200 feet. "Here for four hours the battle raged," wrote Kennedy, "the braves crawling to the edge of the coulee and exchanging shots with the more adventurous of the enemy. A head, a hand, a piece of blanket or robe, anything was enough to shoot at. It was a contest in which skill and cunning in taking advantage of the inequalities of the ground came largely into play. It is stated that several were badly injured by heavy stones thrown across the narrow part of the ridges from one coulee into the other. Two Peigans attempted to gallop down the ridge for the purpose of ascertaining the strength and position of the enemy; one was killed outright, and the other badly wounded and his horse killed under him. In all, during this time, about a dozen Blackfeet were killed, and a large number wounded. It is impossible to say how many Crees were killed."

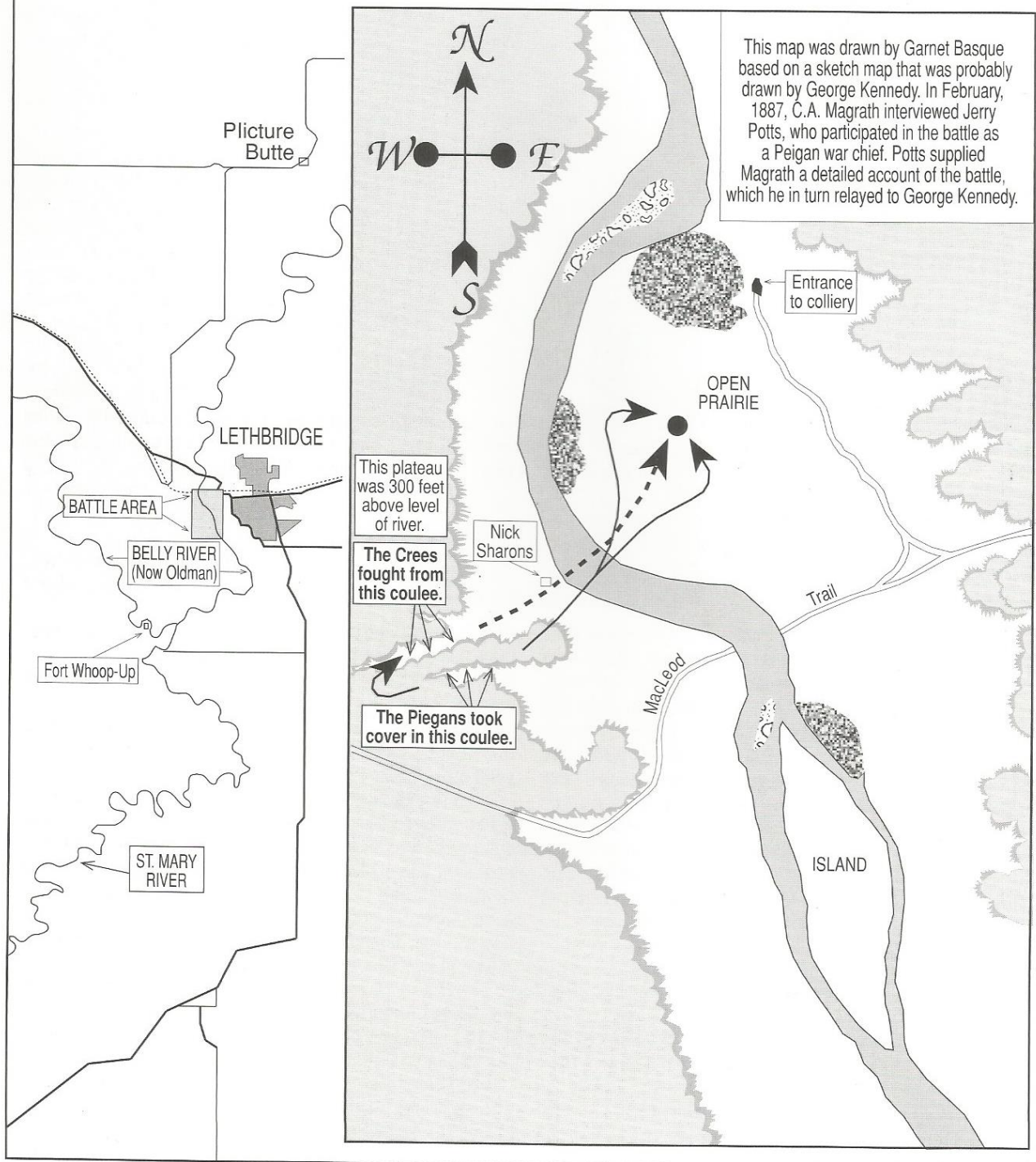
Meanwhile, during the time the battle was taking place, Fort Whoop-Up was occupied by a number of whisky traders. While there is no evidence to suggest

that they participated in the inter-tribal confrontation, a man named Howell Harris was an interested spectator. However, with the white men at Fort Whoop-Up was a man who not only participated in the conflict, but played an important role in the eventual outcome. A Peigan half-breed, Jerry Potts later went on to distinguish himself as a valuable scout for the NWMP.

With the battle between the Crees and Blackfoot essentially stalemated between the two coulees, scouts were sent to fetch Potts. The half-breed responded by assembling a strong force of braves which he positioned behind a small butte. Prior to this the Crees, although outnumbered and having far less firepower, enjoyed a slight edge because of their location. The placement of Potts' force turned this advantage over to the Blackfoot. The Crees now came under heavy fire from the small butte, and recognizing their vulnerability, they "began to effect a strategic movement to the rear by slipping out of the coulee and making for the river."

Unfortunately for the Crees, Potts noticed the retreat and gave the signal to attack — and attack they did. "Some on horseback, some on foot, they poured over the ridge and down the coulee driving the now panic-stricken

THE LAST GREAT INDIAN BATTLE



Crees before them and killing without quarter," wrote Kennedy. "A large number of the latter was forced out of the ravine over a point of a hill to the north. The descent here is some twenty to thirty feet, and almost perpendicular, and over this pursuers and pursued both rushed headlong, horses and men tumbling over each other, the men fighting and struggling for dear life, until the bank was reached and the fight became a butchery."

As the Crees made a break for the river, Mountain Chief had mounted his horse and joined the attack, running over two of them before they reached the water. "As they were crossing the river, I jumped off my horse and stabbed one of the Crees between the shoulders. He had a spear and I took that away from him. I jumped off my horse again and just as I returned there was a Cree who raised his gun to fire at me. I ran over him and he grabbed my horse by the bridle. I swung my horse's head around to protect myself and took the butt of my whip and knocked him down. When I struck him he looked at me and I saw that his nose had been cut off. I heard afterwards that a bear had bitten his nose off. After I knocked him down, I killed him. I jumped off my horse and just then I met another Cree. We had a fight on our horses. He shot at me and I shot at him. When we got close together, I took his arrows away from him, and he grabbed me by the hair of the head. I saw him reach for his dagger and just then we clinched. My war bonnet had worked down on my neck, and when he struck at me with his dagger it struck the war bonnet and I looked down and saw the handle sticking out and grabbed it and killed the other Indian. Then we rushed the Crees in the pit again and my father came up with one of the old muskets and handed it to me. It had seven balls in it and when I fired it, it kicked so hard that it almost killed me. I feel that I had a more narrow escape by shooting that gun than I had with the Indians. When we returned I had taken nine different scalps."

The worst slaughter of the Crees occurred while they were trying to cross the Belly River. As the Crees plunged into the current, moving across almost in a single mass, "the Blackfeet stood on the brink and shot them down like sheep," wrote Kennedy. "To use Jerry Potts' own expression, 'You could fire with your eyes shut and be sure to kill a Cree.' The scene now, and during the charge, must have been one not easily forgotten. The river valley was filled with dust and smoke, the air resounded with the report of rifles and the deafening war cries of the Blackfeet, while thick and fast came the death yells of the Crees."

Mountain Horse also described the carnage during the Crees futile attempt to escape. "Here a fearful massacre occurred, the waters of the river turning crimson with blood. Chief Calf Shirt, already wounded in the neck and arm, with arrows sticking out of his body, dispatched two of the enemy with his Bowie knife. . . Stabbing and drowning became the order of the day. Prairie Chicken, a Blood warrior, jumped his horse from a cutbank into the river to go after the enemy, south of where Ashcroft's mine now operates. Approximately ten Crees survived this battle in the river and crossed safely to the other side, just south of where the CPR bridge now

stands, where they proceeded to entrench themselves in the brush. . . These surviving Crees had only one revolver and no ammunition as their supply of powder was wet from the recent encounter in the river. One casualty occurred in this trench, a Cree shooting another brave accidentally with his arrow."

At this point the Blackfoot could easily have wiped out what remained of the Cree raiders, but instead they were allowed to escape so that they could tell their story. Although eyewitness accounts are available, it is still difficult to ascertain precise figures on the dead and wounded in this, the last great Indian battle fought in North America. However, based on the information available, a reasonable estimate can be made. The Cree had apparently started out their campaign with a war party numbering 600-800 braves. Half of these turned back as a result of Piapot's vision, thus approximately 300-400 actually engaged the Blackfoot and its allies. Of these, 10-12 are all that appear to have survived. Thus it is safe to assume that over 300 Crees and Assiniboines were killed in the battle. On the Blackfoot side, it is estimated that they lost 40 dead and had some 50-60 wounded.

Two men who died fighting on the side of the Crees were the Sutherland brothers. In *Indian Tales of the Canadian Prairies*, published in 1913, James Sanderson wrote: "Two of the finest young warriors the Crees ever had were two Scottish half-breeds, sons of a Highland Scot named Hugh Sutherland, a Hudson's Bay Co. employee. One was called Oo-sa-us-tik-wan, or Yellow Hair, and the other Tip-oo-es-tik-wan, or Curly Hair. They were tall, strapping young fellows, very fair and blue eyed. They had a great reputation which they fully deserved as warriors, and absolutely without an atom of fear in their composition."

Sanderson, who met the two brothers at the Red Ochre Hills just as they were about to start on the campaign with the Crees, asked Yellow Hair if he would not be better suited behind a plough than heading off to war against the Blackfoot. "I have never been taught anything but fighting," was the reply. "I suppose I have relatives beyond the Big Water who would be sorry to see me leading this kind of life, but how can I help it?"

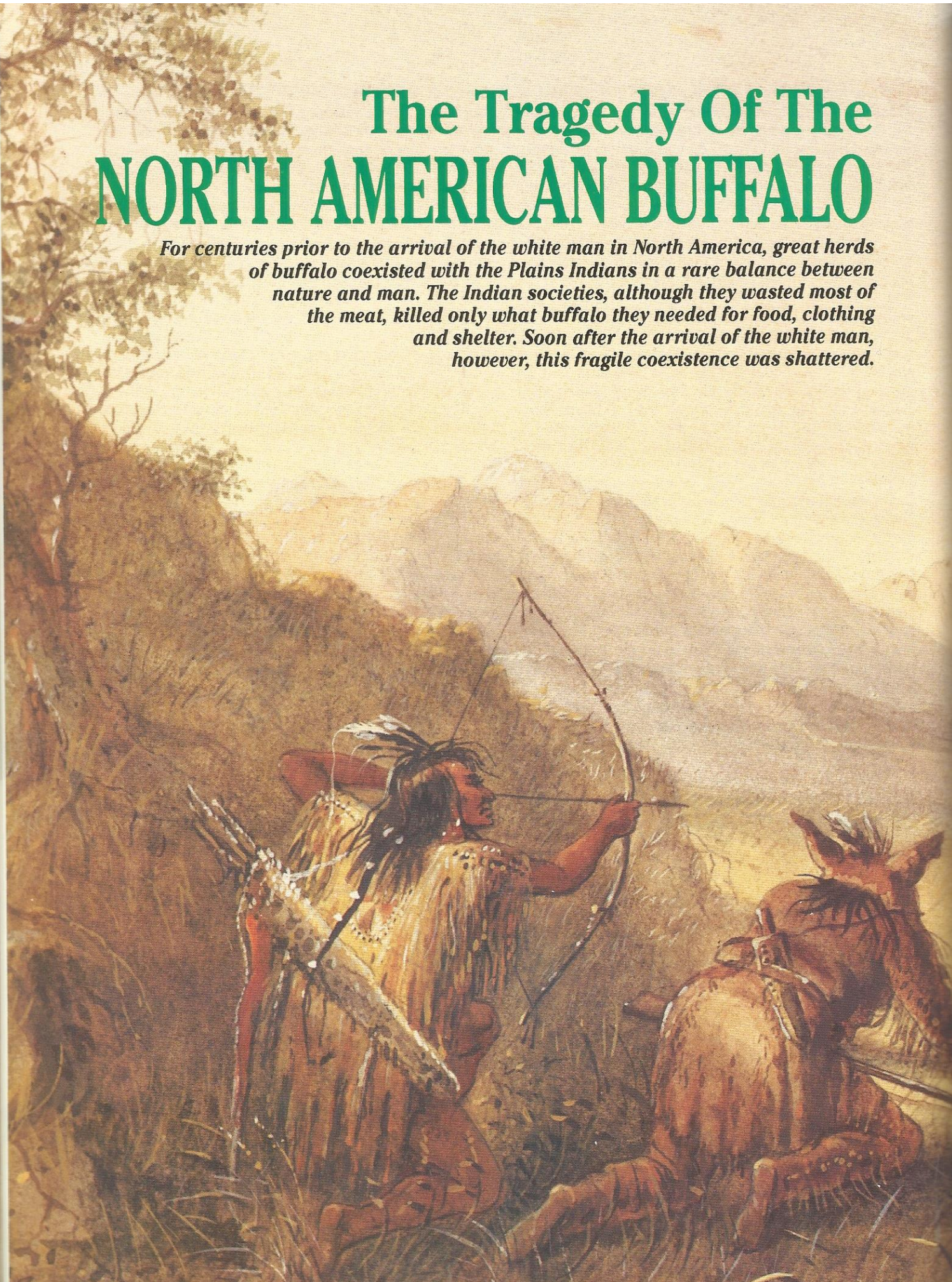
The Sutherland brothers had led the initial charge against the Blackfoot camp. At first victory seemed assured, but when the sound of battle attracted the other nearby camps, the Crees were soon outnumbered. Nevertheless, the Crees held their ground, fighting until the approach of night, when they retreated, still fighting, across the Belly River. "The two brothers made a grand stand before they fell," wrote Sanderson, "fighting with their knives after their lower limbs had been rendered powerless by the bullets of their enemy, and only yielding up their scalps with their lives."

The Sutherland brothers had put up such a courageous and determined fight that, in their memory, the Blackfoot erected two stone cairns to mark the spots where they fell. The markers were still visible on the west side of the Belly River until the turn of the century and, remarked Sanderson, "no Blackfoot, Blood or Peigan passes them without adding a stone or two to the memorial pile."



The Tragedy Of The NORTH AMERICAN BUFFALO

For centuries prior to the arrival of the white man in North America, great herds of buffalo coexisted with the Plains Indians in a rare balance between nature and man. The Indian societies, although they wasted most of the meat, killed only what buffalo they needed for food, clothing and shelter. Soon after the arrival of the white man, however, this fragile coexistence was shattered.



BISON, frequently called buffalo by most North Americans, are of two species: the wood buffalo, (*Bison bison athabasca*), and the plains buffalo (*Bison bison bison*). However, with the hybridization of the two species in some areas of the country, the term "buffalo" is generally accepted when referring to these animals.

The wood buffalo, with the male reaching 2,500 pounds or more, and the cows weighing as much as 1,600 pounds, is the larger of the two. By comparison, a full-grown male plains buffalo weighs between 1,400 and 2,200 pounds, the cow weighing from 750 to 1,100. The territory occupied by each species was also different. The wood buffalo ranged over the western two-thirds of Alberta, including the Rocky Mountains, then extended southward along the eastern foothills to the New Mexico border. The range of the plains buffalo extended from the tip of Texas all the way up to southern Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and east to the Atlantic Ocean. However, the greatest concentration of animals was in the great plains region.

There are numerous historical references to the vast numbers of buffalo that populated the plains of North America prior to the arrival of the white man. Francisco Vazquez de Coronado, of Spain, one of the first white men to visit the American west, saw herds of buffalo so

large that "it was impossible to number them." Rev. Robert Rundle described them as "in numbers — numberless," while another early viewer compared them to "the fish in the sea. . . ."

In 1862, Nathaniel Langford, the first superintendent of Yellowstone National Park, described a particularly large herd of buffalo he had seen. One day, after setting up camp, Langford heard a distant rumbling sound which he thought was thunder. His guide, however, assured him it was a herd of buffalo, as yet still four or five miles away. "Soon we saw a cloud of dust rising in the east," wrote Rundle, "and the rumbling grew louder and I think it was about half an hour when the front of the herd came fairly into view. From an observation with field glasses, we judged the herd to be 5 or 6 miles wide, and the herd was more than an hour passing us at a gallop. There seemed to be no space unoccupied by buffaloes. They were running as rapidly as a horse can go at a keen gallop, about 12 miles an hour. . . ." Langford multiplied the width of the herd by its length. He then multiplied this figure by the approximate density of the animals. By his calculations, he estimated that this single herd numbered a staggering 1,000,000 animals. As incredible as this figure may sound, Thomas Farnham, travelling west on the Santa Fe Trail in 1839, had recorded an even larger one. For three days he passed through country "so thickly covered with these noble animals, that where viewed from a height, it scarcely afforded a sight of a square



league of its surface." By taking measurements, Farnham calculated that the herd occupied 1,350 square miles.

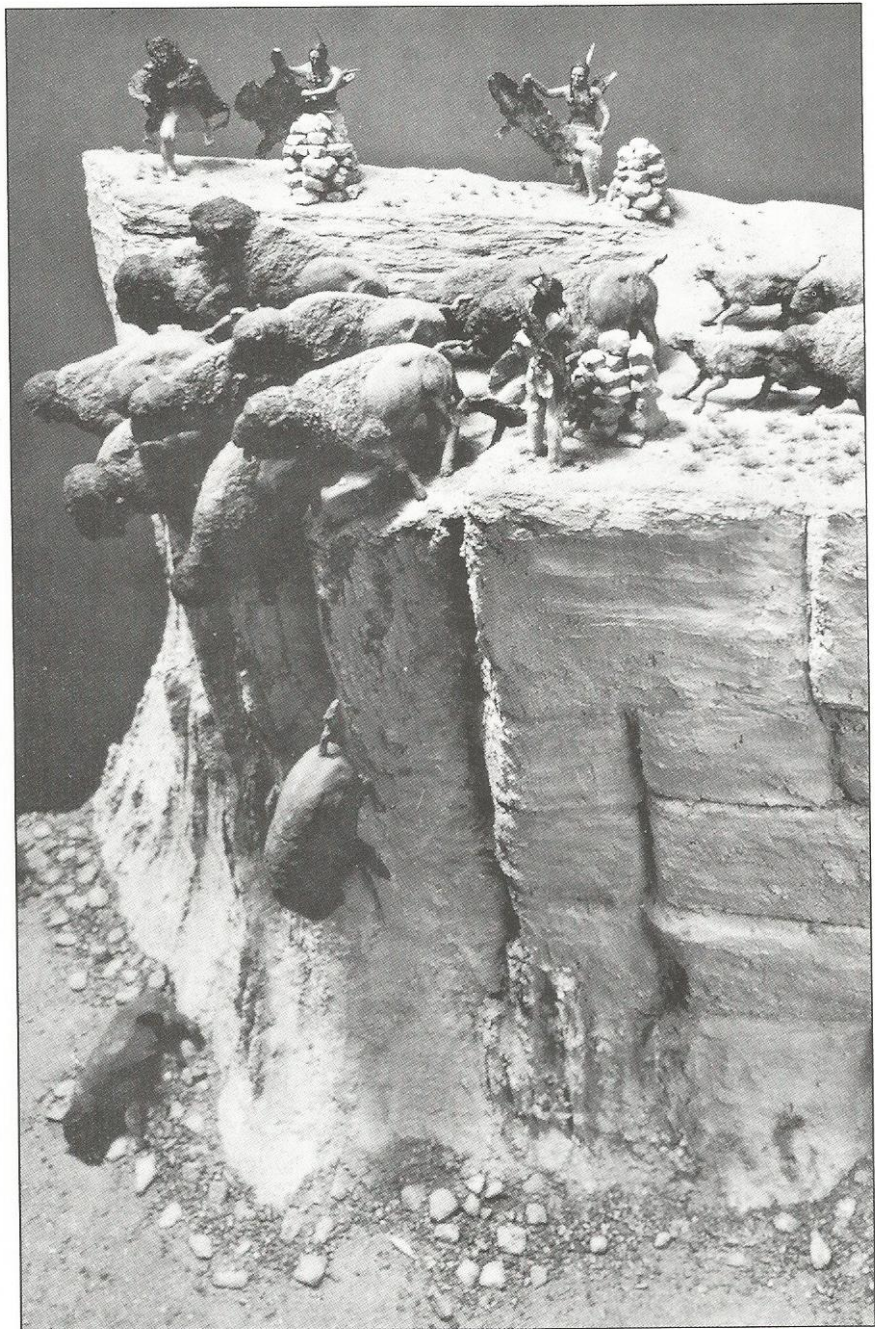
There is no disputing the fact that the population of the buffalo, prior to the arrival of the white man, numbered in the millions. The question has always been, how many millions? Most have estimated the total population of buffalo at 60,000,000 to 70,000,000. Tom McHugh, author of *The Time of the Buffalo*, considered this figure too high. He decided to try to reach a more accurate figure by multiplying the size of the magnitude of the grassland — 1,250,000 square miles — by the maximum number of buffalo a square mile could have comfortably supported. After deducting 4,000,000 from his total to allow for elk, deer and pronghorn, he arrived at an estimate of 30,000,000. Whatever the actual figure was, however, during the next 100 years, this noble creature would be virtually exterminated by settlers pushing westward with ruthless zeal.

The Indians, of course, had always hunted buffalo. Henry Kelsey, the first white man to see the buffalo in western Canada when he came west in 1691, noted that the Indians were killing them wholesale. La Verendrye and his sons, La Corne, Saint Pierre, Hendry and Alexander Henry also spoke of the wholesale slaughter.

"Indians killed for tid-bits only," wrote L.V. Kelly in *The Range Men*, "leaving tons and tons of prime meat rotting on the prairies after every hunt, more even than the wolves which followed in droves could devour. Thousands of buffalo, even up as late as 1875 and a year or so later, were annually slaughtered by the red men for the unborn calves, which were considered a rare dainty."

The Indians employed two favourite methods for killing buffalo in large numbers. One method was to build a large corral of heavy timbers with a narrow entrance and runway. The Indians would stampede a herd of buffalo into the corral, where they were trapped and slaughtered. Because the Indians were superstitious, and believed that any escaping buffalo would warn others of the trap, every captured animal was killed.

Perhaps the most fascinating method used in killing mass numbers of buffalo was the buffalo jump. In this procedure, the buffalo were stampeded over a steep cliff. Those animals which were not killed outright by the fall



This display shows how the Indians stampeded the buffalo over steep cliffs to their deaths. One of the most famous sites is Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, located northwest of Fort Macleod.

were finished off by hunters. One of the oldest and best preserved sites is the Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump northwest of Fort Macleod. Excavations show that the site was used by four successive cultures over a period of 5,500 years, and the well-preserved bone beds are some 40 feet thick. Now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, in 1987 a superb interpretive centre was opened here.

The buffalo were much more than a food source to the Indians. Buffalo "bones were made into tools for shaping stone, scraping hides, working leather and for sewing," wrote Liz Brian in *The Buffalo People*; "its sinews and hair were twisted into cordage; its horns, bladder,



William "Buffalo Bill" Cody is featured in this 1894 painting, "The Great Buffalo Hunt," by Louis Maurer. Cody is in the centre foreground. To his left is Grand Duke Alexis, and to the right, riding out of the painting, is Gen. George Custer.

paunch and scrotum were used as containers; its dried dung was indispensable as fuel on the treeless plains." However, despite the terrible waste, the buffalo were so numerous that the Indians had no noticeable effect on the burgeoning population.

With the arrival of the white man, however, hunting buffalo for sport gained in popularity. In 1854, Sir George Gore, a rich nobleman, left his native Ireland to sample this new sport through America's buffalo country. Gore's hunting trip lasted almost three years, covered more than 6,000 miles and cost some \$500,000. He was accompanied by a personal staff of 40 servants and several scientists, their supplies being transported in six wagons and 21 French carts. One wagon, containing only firearms and ammunition, included 75 muzzle-loading rifles. By the time Gore disbanded his buffalo-hunting expedition in 1857, his reckless slaughter had eliminated 2,000 animals. Eleven years later, William Drummond arrived from Scotland to organize a similar buffalo-shooting expedition. He too left the plains strewn for miles with the carcasses of slain buffalo.

The sport of Buffalo hunting quickly became the rage, its reputation being enhanced by the tales of the returning eastern dudes. The railroads joined in the buffalo slaughter by promoting low-priced buffalo-hunting excursions. Most of the "sportsmen" who participated in the railroad's hunting forays, however, never left the train, killing the buffalo through the convenience of open train windows.

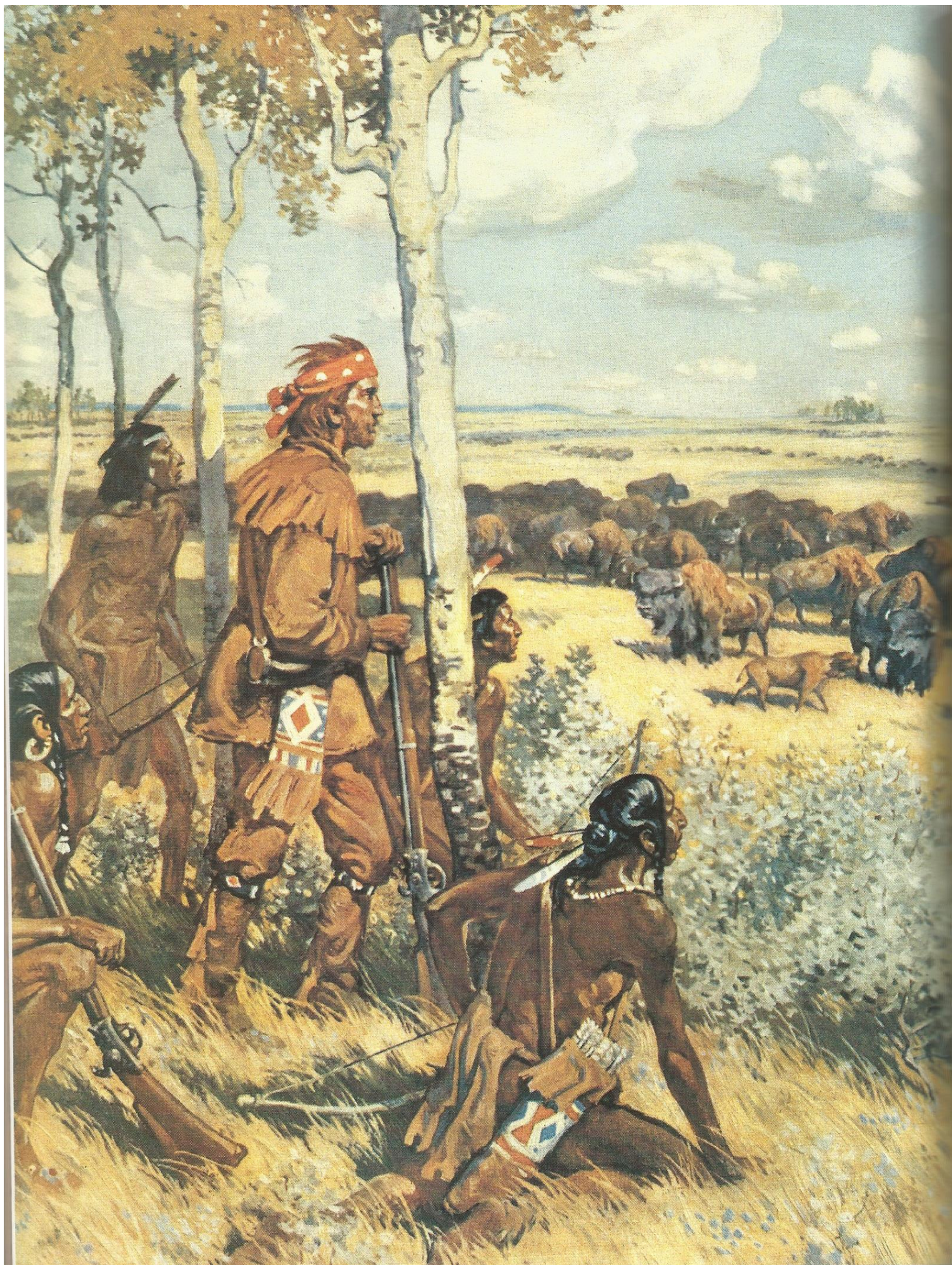
Even Gen. George Custer relished in the hunt. Once, however, when chasing a buffalo on horseback at top speed, the experience almost proved fatal when the buffalo suddenly veered right. In the excitement of the moment, as Custer tried to grab the reins with the hand in which he held his revolver, he accidentally pulled the trigger. The bullet entered his horse's head, killing him instantly. As the horse collapsed, it threw Custer head over heels, but, remarkably, he was not even scratched.

their overall population was not affected to any great degree. However, a new breed of hunter was about to enter the scene that would have a devastating effect on the buffalo herds.

Although there had always been fur bartering among the Indian tribes long before the arrival of the white man, it had scarcely made a dent in the massive buffalo population. The trade expanded in the 1700s, when early explorers exchanged trinkets or goods for rich buffalo robes. While this trade reached its peak in the mid-1800s, it still did not pose a serious threat to the buffalo population. However, when American and European tanneries developed new tanning processes in 1871, the hide business began to flourish. Buffalo leather, rated as better than cowhide, was needed for the machinery of an emerging industrial nation. But it had other uses as well. The British army used it to replace many of the standard articles in a soldier's outfit. In addition, it was used for cushions, linings and the tops of carriages and hearses. As the demand steadily increased, it spawned a new breed of men.

Described by some as "uncouth barbarians," these new buffalo hunters could be more appropriately labelled buffalo exterminators. They swarmed to the prairie for one reason — to accumulate as many buffalo hides they could as quickly as possible. One of their number, Tom Nixon, recorded the "honour" of slaughtering the most buffalo — 120 — in the shortest time — 40 minutes! His rapid firing overheated the rifle barrel so badly that it was ruined. On another occasion, Nixon killed 204 animals. Even this, however, was not a record, one Orlando A. Bond being credited with killing over 250 animals in one stand.

Ironically, the buffalo contributed to their own slaughter. They preferred the wide-open range where they could be easily spotted and upon which there was no place to hide. Even if they scattered at the first sign of trouble, they would have made the hunter's job far more





(Above) Prior to the arrival of the white man, the Indians were forced to follow the buffalo herds on foot, carrying all their belongings on their backs and the backs of dogs. The introduction of the horse gave the Indians much greater mobility. They were now able to hunt buffalo on horseback. This painting by A.J. Miller depicts Indians attacking the buffalo in this manner.

(Opposite page) "Kelsey Sees The Buffalo, August, 1691," was painted by Charles W. Jefferys for a 1928 Hudson's Bay Co. calendar.

(Below) This painting by Miller depicts an Indian celebration following a kill.

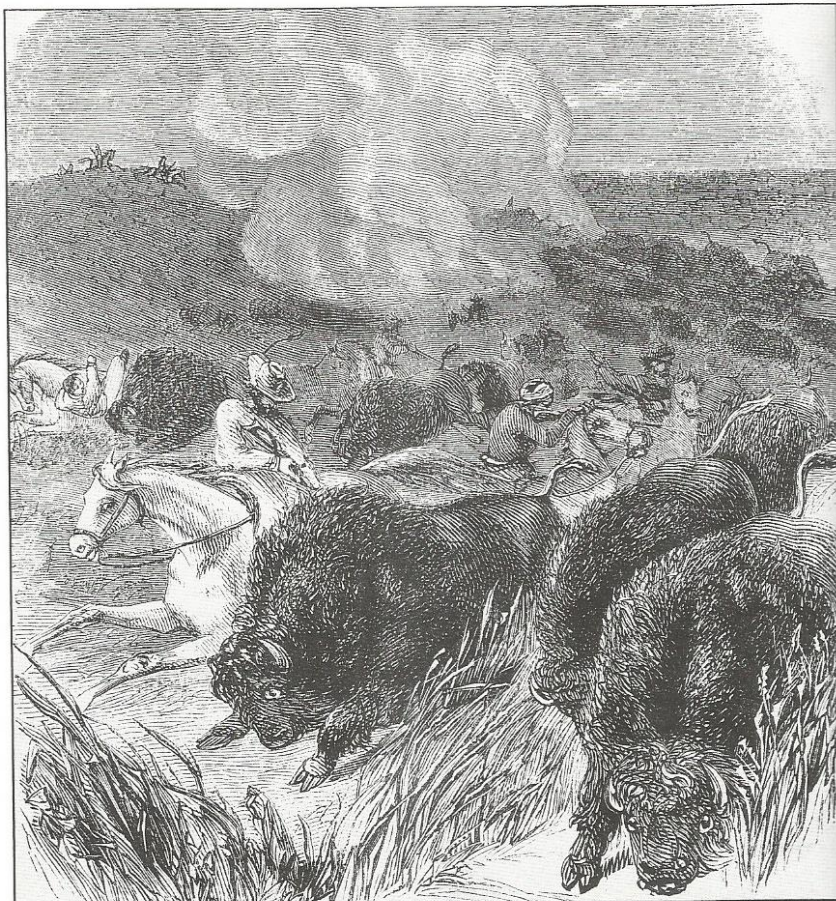


difficult. True, they were often pursued on horseback and killed as they fled. But this type of killing, known as "the chase," was more popular in the Canadian prairies.

The hunters of the American plains preferred what has been termed a "stand." A stand, quite simply, meant the buffalo would simply stand around while you shot animal after animal. In this type of killing, the hunter would approach the herd slowly from downwind. Once close enough, the hunter could begin systematically killing the buffalo. "The report of the gun and the noise made by the fall of the wounded buffalo," wrote one plains observer, "astound, but do not drive away, the rest." Kansas marksman Thomas Linton killed 3,000 in the 1872 season, while George Reighard slaughtered about 3,000 in a single month. During the same season the three Clarkson brothers killed about 7,000.

Boosted by this rampant slaughter, the shipment of hides reached new peaks. At Dodge City, warehouses bulged with 60,000 to 80,000 hides. One company shipped more than 200,000 hides in 1872-73, the first winter the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad operated out of Dodge. Between 1872 and 1874 this railroad alone shipped out 459,453 hides. When calculations took into account the shipments of the Union Pacific and Kansas Pacific railways, as well as the number of buffalo killed by Indians and settlers, it was estimated that well over 4,000,000 buffalo had been slaughtered in 1872, 1873 and 1874.

When the buffalo population of the central plains had been wiped out, the hunters directed their attention to the southern herds, and by the fall of 1877 some 1,500 hunters ranged over the Texas plains. Their success became evident the following spring when one hide merchant alone had four acres of property blanketed with bales of hides. During the 1876-77 season, 200,000 hides were shipped from Fort Griffin alone, and within two years the buffalo had been virtually exterminated from the southern plains. At this point, some of the hunters turned to cattle ranching. Others, however, turned their attention northward, to Montana, where the last large herds existed. By 1882 there were at least 5,000 hunters on the northern plains. The following



(Above) *The Buffalo chase. Although this was a dangerous way to kill buffalo, it was the method preferred by the Metis.*

(Below) *In the American west, hunting and killing buffalo for sport became so popular that trains would often stop in the midst of a buffalo herd to allow passengers to slaughter the animals, which were then left to rot on the plains. Trains that did not stop, slowed sufficiently to allow the passengers the "sport" to shoot "from every available window, with rifles, carbines and revolvers."*



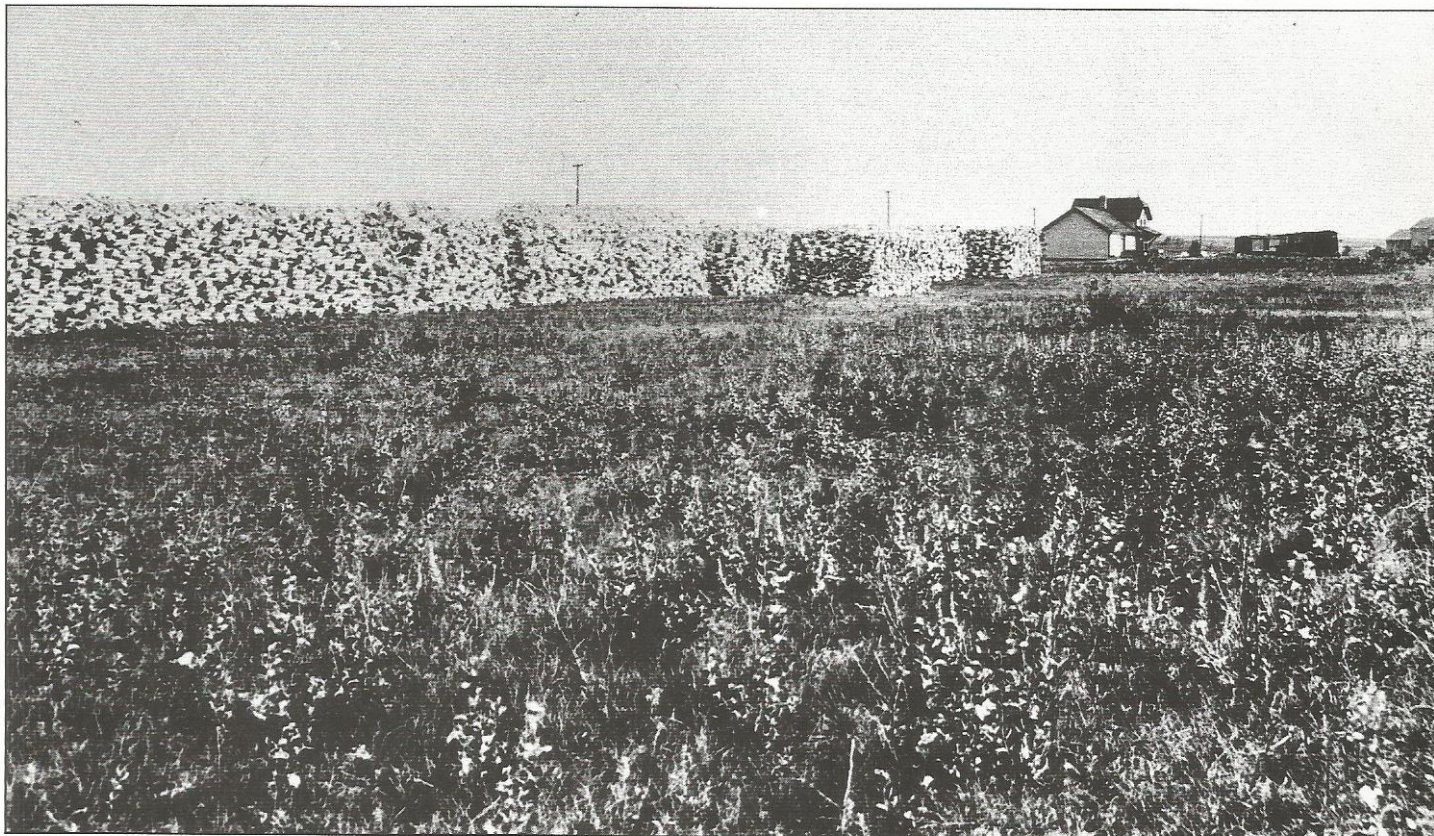
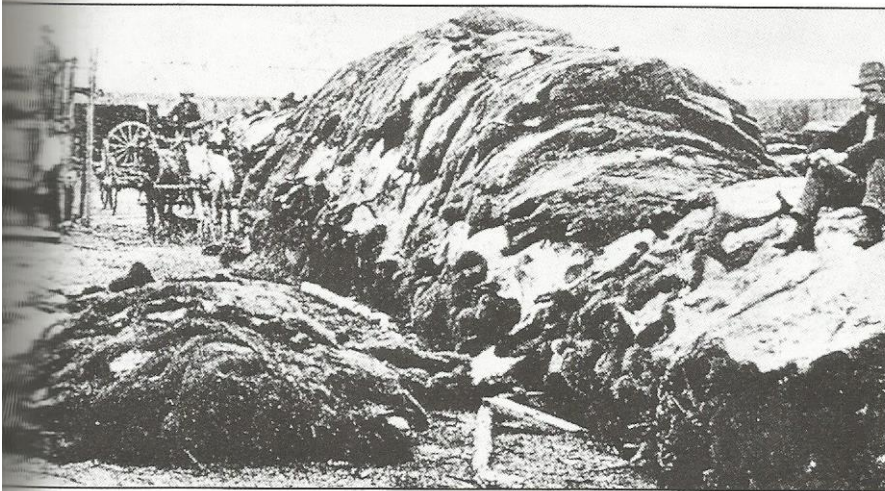
year a large herd of 50,000 to 80,000 buffalo was seen crossing the Yellowstone River. By the end of the season they had been completely wiped out. The following season a fur buyer from Minneapolis scoured the northern plains for buffalo hides. Despite an exhaustive search, he found only enough to make up one carload. Two years earlier, one Montana dealer alone had shipped 250,000 hides from the same region. And there was no hope that the herds could be replenished from Canada, since most of the buffalo population across the border had been extinguished by 1880.

By the mid-1880s, all major buffalo herds in North America had been exterminated. There were still scattered pockets of buffalo here and there, but these too were eventually hunted and killed, so that by 1888 there

were only an estimated 20 animals roaming wild. Fortunately, there were also 261 held in captivity across North America.

Prior to the total extinction of the buffalo, a number of Canadians tried to ensure their survival as a species. Two of the first were Charlie Alloway and John McKay. In the spring of 1873, Alloway and McKay teamed up to capture three buffalo calves, which they brought to Winnipeg. The following spring they captured three more, although one died. John McKay then turned his share in the five calves to his brother James, who went on to become the first speaker in the Manitoba legislature. When McKay died in 1879, Alloway sold the herd, then numbering 13 animals, to Col. Sam Bedson of Winnipeg for \$1,000.

Bedson, the son of a Montreal army officer, had been a part of the Wolseley expedition against Riel at Fort Garry. Bedson was a lover of wildlife, and under his care the herd was increased to about 100 animals by 1888, at that time over one-third of all the buffalo held in captivity. Unfortunately, with the steady influx of settlers moving into the area, Bedson realized it was no longer practical to keep a buffalo herd. According to an unpublished manuscript by Dr. Peter Neufeld, about six were donated to zoos in New York and London. Donald Smith, a Manitoba politician, got at least 27, all but five of which he donated to the Canadian gov-



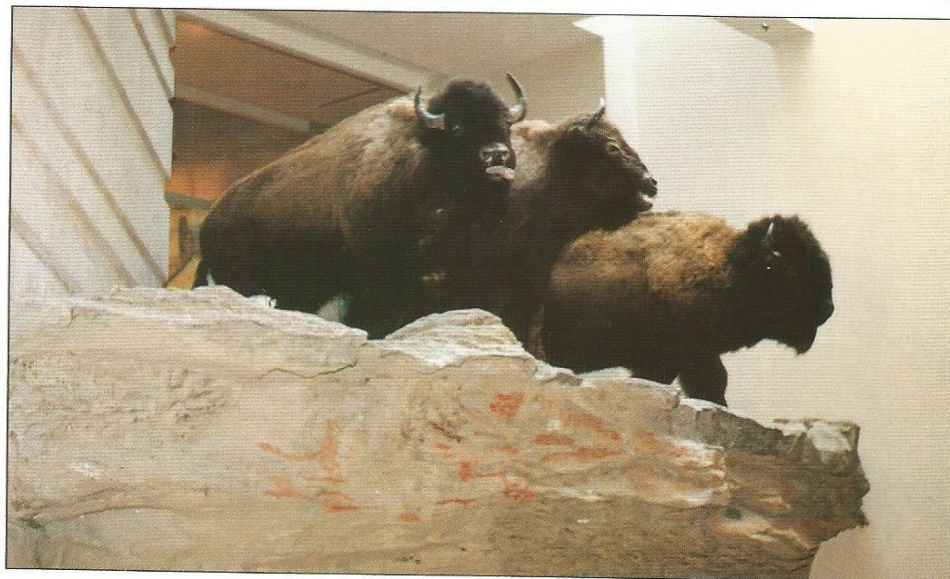
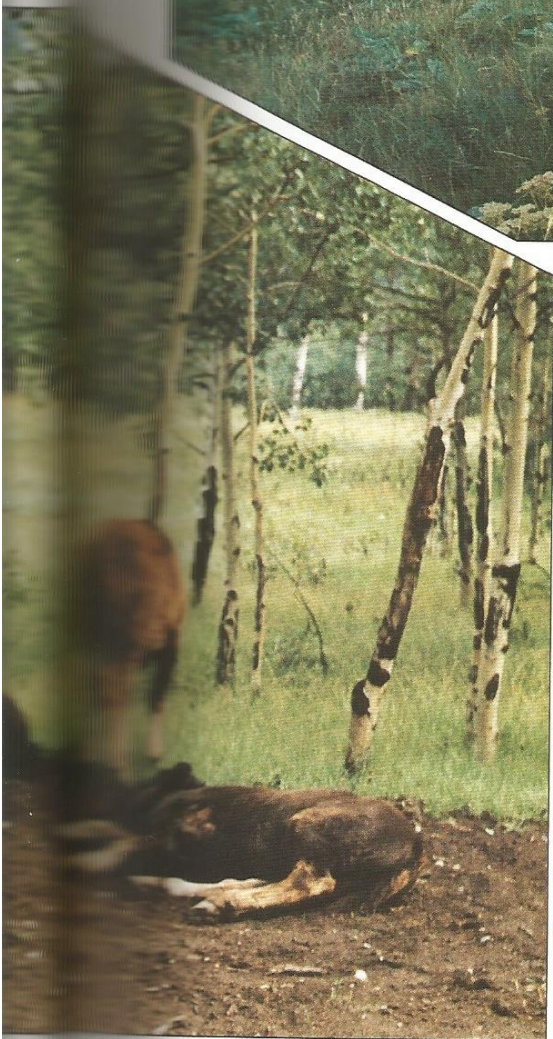




*(Above) Buffalo roam free in a large paddock near Waterton Lake Park, Alberta. Vehicles are permitted to drive through the park for a firsthand look .
(Opposite page, top) Plains Indians about to butcher a buffalo following a successful hunt.*

(Left) The herd of buffalo in the paddock at Banff, Alberta, consisted of eight animals when this photograph was taken in the summer of 1990.

(Below) This display of buffalo about to fall over a cliff can be seen at the Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump Interpretation Centre in Alberta.



ernment, which in turn installed them at Banff National Park.

A Winnipeg group tried to form a company to buy the remainder of Bedson's herd, but they were eventually sold to Charles J. "Buffalo" Jones of Kansas. Jones planned to open a big game preserve in Texas where he would charge hunters a large fee to kill the animals. "While in Winnipeg," wrote Neufeld, "he was besieged with telegrams from persons in Minnesota and the Dakotas anxious to buy bison at \$500-\$1,000 each. Some ended up in American zoos and private preserves. His own grandiose dream failed when intense heat and ticks killed many animals."

Meanwhile, another small herd had been started in the Flathead country of Montana by Walking Coyote, a Pend d'Oreille Indian. Walking Coyote had spent the winter of 1872 in the Sweetgrass Hills near the Alberta-Montana border. In the spring of 1873, he captured eight buffalo calves and herded them to land he had settled about 10 miles from the St. Ignatius mission. There he turned the four surviving calves loose to graze.

An Indian-Mexican by the name of Michael Don Pablo also had a small herd on the Flathead at this time. The buffalo interbred and by 1883 Walking Coyote laid claim to 14 animals. Another rancher, a French-Canadian named Charles Allard, recognized the possibility of raising purebred buffalo and, in partnership with Pablo, purchased 12 of Walking Coyote's animals for \$250 each. Then in 1893 Charles Jones arrived in Montana from Kansas with 44 buffalo that Allard and Pablo purchased and added to their herd. As the herd increased many were sold to dealers throughout the United States. When Allard died in 1896, his share of the herd, some 150 animals, were sold and the profit went to his immediate family. Despite this, the herd, now owned by Charles Allard Jr., his brother Joseph, Pablo and Andrew Stringer, totalled about 250 animals by 1899.

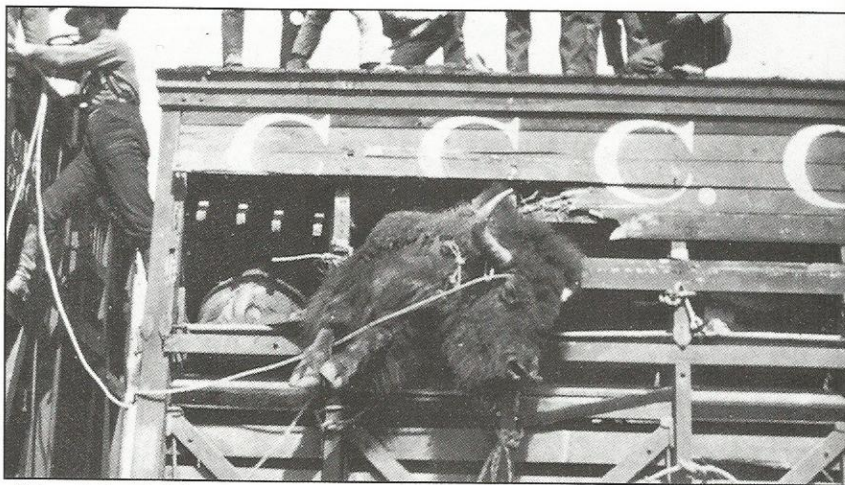
By 1906 the Montana herd, numbering about 800 head, was the largest in North America. However, they were roaming the Flathead Indian Reservation, and when the United States government decided to open the reservation to settlement, Pablo was forced to sell or move his herd. Pablo offered the buffalo to the United States government, but his offer was rejected. Pablo then applied to Canada for mountain buffalo range in Alberta.

At this point four Canadians entered the picture and became instrumental in returning the Manitoba herd to Canada. They were

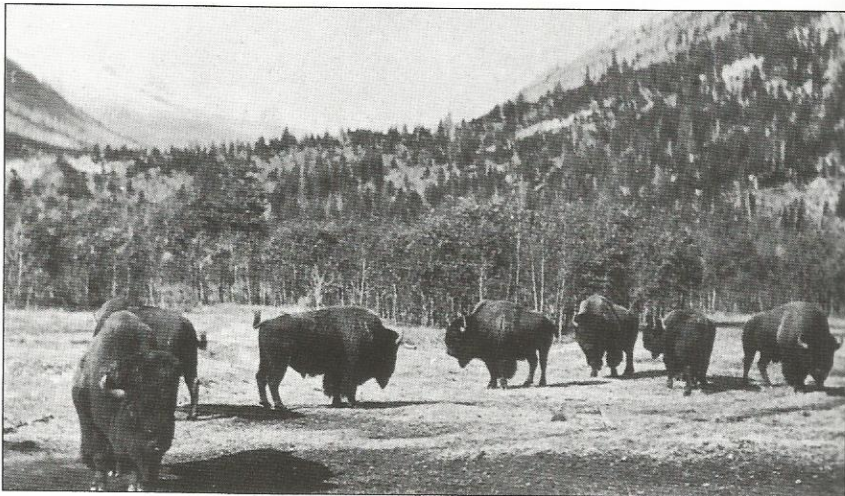
Norman Luxton, Alex Ayotte, Howard Douglas and the Hon. Frank Oliver, then Minister of the Interior in Ottawa. Luxton, a close friend of Oliver, convinced the politician that the herd should be purchased and moved to Canada. Oliver sent Douglas to inspect the herd, and he recommended the Canadian government purchase the entire lot. With six months Ayotte had negotiated the sale, and in February, 1907, Pablo signed a contract to sell Canada the entire herd at \$245 a head, although the exact number of the herd was unknown.

The round-up and shipment of the animals is a story in itself. By June the first 199 buffalo arrived at Elk Island National Park in Alberta. In the fall of 1907 another 211 buffalo were shipped to the same park. One old animal still carried brass caps on the horns, a relic of Buffalo Bill Cody's wild west show of Kansas.

In 1909, 190 buffalo arrived at Alberta's Wainwright Buffalo Park, the first of six shipments over the next six years. The following five shipments totalled 98 animals. In all 716 buffalo were delivered. Those that originally had gone to Elk Island were also transferred to Wainwright except for about 50 head left to form the nucleus of today's herd. About 75 buffalo still remained on the Flathead Reservation, but were so wild they could not be rounded up so Pablo invited his Canadian associ-



(Above) A skittish cow from the Pablo herd that died enroute to Canada.
(Below) The buffalo herd at Rocky Mountain Park (now Banff), Alberta.



ates to come down for a wild buffalo hunt. Local citizens were so upset with this plan that they had the U.S. authorities declare the animals protected. Eventually, however, all the animals were destroyed by indiscriminate hunting.

Now that Canada had acquired a buffalo herd, management problems began to surface. Previously, buffalo suffered only those illnesses traditional to wildlife, but soon they began to contract domestic diseases such as tuberculous and brucellosis. In addition, local ranchers resented the buffalo utilizing cattle rangelands.

Despite these difficulties, however, within two years after the last animal arrived, the herd had doubled. Park managers did not react to the obvious problems that were developing but instead accepted a further increase in the herd. Soon the buffalo exceeded 5,000 in number and the limited size of the grazing lands made it impossible to maintain a level of adequate natural forage. To resolve this problem, 1,000 acres of farmland were cultivated to grow oats and hay for feed.

By 1921, about 9,000 animals were contained within the limited areas of the park and overgrazing had all but destroyed any natural regeneration. To ease this problem, 2,000 buffalo a year were being slaughtered. Despite this, the population steadily increased. In 1925, there were 10,000 buffalo in Wainwright Buffalo Park and the poor conditions began affecting their health. The only solution was to greatly reduce the number through wholesale slaughter, but political and public opposition would not agree to this plan.

To the north, bordering Alberta and the Northwest Territories, lay Wood Buffalo Park, 10,000 square miles of wilderness and the home of about 1,500 wood buffalo. Politicians complained that this large area was devoted to too few animals. The land was already a park, requiring no further protection designation, and could accommodate a much larger buffalo population. A decision was made to start transferring a selected number of the more healthy animals to Wood Buffalo Park.

This proposal was strongly condemned by experts in wildlife management all over North America. The consensus was that eventually interbreeding between the wood and plains buffalo would endanger the purity of each species. These concerns fell on deaf bureaucratic ears, however, and the plan was put soon into action.

On June 15, 1925, the first trainload of buffalo left Wainwright bound for Waterways, the end of steel. Here, two special barges were loaded and moved downstream 257 miles along the Athabasca and Slave rivers. At a point called Hay Camp, on the Slave River south of Fort Smith, they were released. This operation was repeated six more times that same summer.

During the selection of animals to be transferred, the tuberculosis test was not taken on the assumption that only older animals were susceptible to the disease. This assumption proved wrong and soon both the plains and wood buffalo were heavily infected with tuberculosis. With an estimated 8,000 buffalo now sharing the same range and interbreeding, the herd became a hybrid stock of diseased animals.

Many of the Wainwright buffalo did not like the area

where they were dropped off on the Slave River and immediately started migrating south, crossing the Peace River to the rich delta lands of the Peace and Athabasca. To protect these 400 animals, the park boundary was extended for another 7,300 square miles. Soon after, the 17,300 square miles became known as Wood Buffalo National Park. After 10 years in their new environment, the more than 6,000 animals transferred to Wood Buffalo had increased to a population of over 12,000. In the meantime, Wainwright Park was maintaining a population of about 7,000 animals by slaughtering at least 2,000 each year. Most of these animals were in poor condition and about half were found to be tubercular. Finally a decision was made to exterminate the entire Wainwright herd, and in the winter of 1939-40, all were killed, including some elk, deer, and moose that had resided in the park.

In Wood Buffalo National Park, meanwhile, disease continued to take its toll. Tuberculosis remains unchecked; brucellosis was discovered in 1940 and Anthrax broke out in the 1960s. Anthrax is so ancient that Moses was accused of giving it to the Egyptians, and in the 18th and 19th centuries it was a widespread cause of death for man and beast in Europe.

The Anthrax spore remains in the soil for hundreds of years, but during an outbreak can kill a buffalo within seven days. A system of vaccination was introduced to control the spread, but it was expensive and had limited effectiveness, so it was discontinued.

In 1957, an astonishing discovery was made in the northwest section of Wood Buffalo National Park. When an isolated herd of 200 buffalo were sighted, five of them were captured and flown to Ottawa for study. There, scientists concluded that they were indeed the last of the purebred wood buffalo. To ensure the preservation of this herd, 18 animals were trapped and transferred to a remote area on the west side of Great Slave Lake. Today this small nucleus has grown to over 2,000 animals, a herd considered to be free of tuberculous and brucellosis. Another 47 were captured, and after testing and quarantine, 24 were moved to Elk Island and placed in an isolation area. By 1968 the numbers had doubled and to ensure the herd's survival, some of the animals were relocated into other wilderness areas. The first release was made in the Snake River Valley in Jasper National Park. As soon as they were released, however, they migrated north to Grand Cache. Some were recaptured, but the fate of the rest is unknown.

Four more transfers have taken place under this recovery program, but without a great measure of success. In June, 1980, a small herd was transferred to the Nahanni region, Northwest Territories. In February, 1984, 34 animals were moved to Waterhen, Manitoba, and at the same time 29 animals were transferred to the Hay/Zama lakes region of Alberta. Lastly, in March, 1986, another 34 buffalo were moved to the Nisling River in the Yukon.

Although these efforts to establish new herds of the wood buffalo in the wild have not met the expectations of the Canadian Wildlife Service biologists, the animals have now been downgraded to threatened on the endangered species list.



THE PICTURE OF HEALTH

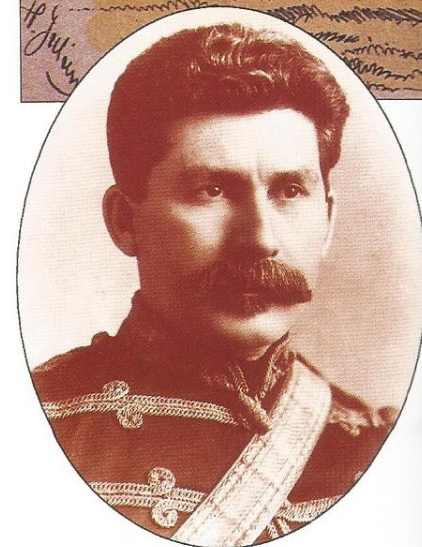
In the popular imagination, the men of the North West Mounted Police enjoy legendary status: resourceful, high-minded and ever ready to take on the lawless with solitary courage. Shocking at it may seem, however, the early outposts of the NWMP were unhealthy places by any reasonable modern standards.

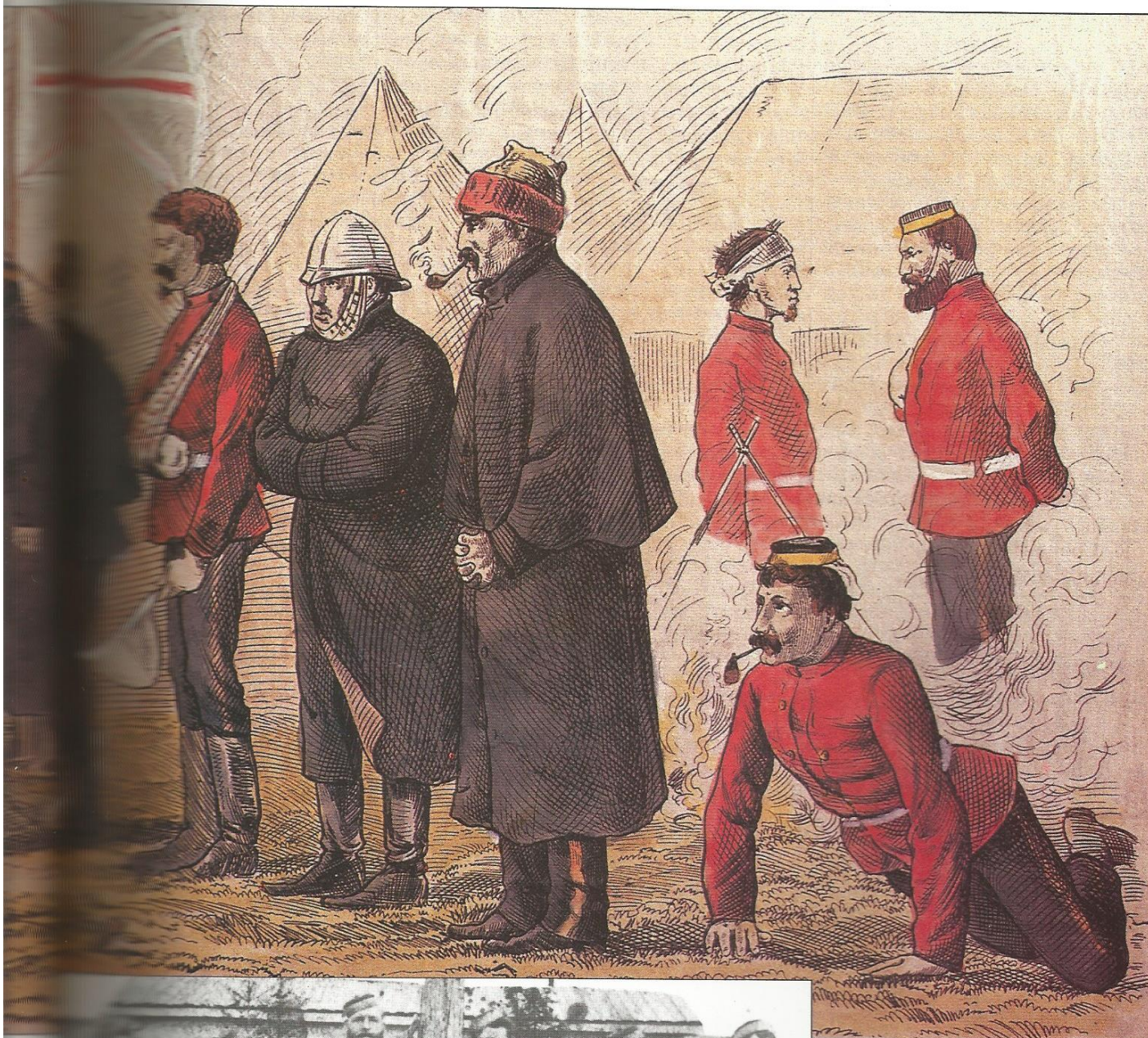
IN late August, 1875, Supt. James Morrow Walsh of the North West Mounted Police (NWMP) reported to his commanding officer that the 50 men of "B" Division were making good progress on the construction of a Cypress Hills garrison. From all accounts, the site they had chosen appeared to be an important one. Situated in what is today southwestern Saskatchewan, their new garrison was in an ideal position to suppress the illegal whiskey trade that merchants from Montana were conducting on the Canadian plains. This trade had been going on more than a quarter century, and the Cypress Hills now held the questionable honour of being one of the most lawless regions on the North American frontier. The traders called it "Whoop-Up Country" and used to brag that "a man's life was worth a horse, and a horse was worth a pint of whiskey." Just two years prior to the arrival of Walsh and his men, a group of Montana frontiersmen had accused a small tribe of Assiniboines of stealing their horses, and after a heavy drinking spree, murdered more than 20 of them in a gunfight.

The NWMP named their new Cypress Hills garrison Fort Walsh, in honour of its commanding officer, and from the start, it was a bastion of law and order. Within a matter of a few months, Fort Walsh was instrumental in suppressing the whisky trade and in regaining Canadian sovereignty over an area that had felt the threat of American annexation for decades. Although the garrison was initially established as a small outpost on the frontier, American and Canadian entrepreneurs soon took advantage of the stability the NWMP brought to the region and began building a town beside the fort. The civilian community quickly developed into one of the largest centres of the period on the Canadian plains. Its yearlong population numbered more than 200, and during the trading season, would swell to over 2,000.

The NWMP chose Battle Creek Coulee as the site of the Cypress Hills garrison. This large valley lay in the middle of their patrol district, an area of some 19,000 square miles. Unfortunately, the coulee gets more than its share

NOTE: While Fort Walsh is located in Saskatchewan, not Alberta, the medical problems facing the North West Mounted Police were probably typical to their forts throughout Alberta. Since this chapter is about the health problems faced by the early recruits, and not Fort Walsh itself, it is considered appropriate for this book.





(Above) Sick parade was part of the daily routine at Fort Walsh. Often the enlisted men faked sickness in order to be declared unfit for the day's duties. It was part of the surgeon's responsibilities to try and separate such cases from legitimate complaints. (Opposite page) Maj. James Morrow Walsh, founder of Fort Walsh and warden over Sitting Bull's Sioux when they were forced into Canada. (Left) NWMP officers at their new headquarters in Fort Walsh, 1879, Colonel Macleod, then the new commissioner of the force, is seated in the chair in the middle.

of bad weather and the site could not have been a worst choice as far as the health of the NWMP was concerned. For long periods in the summer, the coulee could be quite damp, while in winter it usually received more than its fair share of heavy snowfalls. When these environmental factors were coupled with the inadequate housing the NWMP faced, they tended to aggravate health problems among the ranks.

Although the NWMP had limited access to skilled labour and building materials, they could have used more sophisticated construction methods when building their garrison. But for some reason they were reluctant to consider anything except the simplest building techniques. For example, all their structures were single-story, log buildings. This feature in itself was not a drawback; indeed, log buildings can be made quite comfortable. But the NWMP chose to set their buildings directly on the ground surface without the benefit of raised foundations, which tended to make the floors excessively damp. In most instances, they did not even level the building sites, and as a result, it was not uncommon for some structures to slope as much as two feet, from end to end.

Their methods of roof construction were not any better. The roofs of residential buildings and workshops consisted of split poles covered with an eight- to 12-inch layer of clay insulation, the surface of which was protected by a row of planks. Although this arrangement worked reasonably well at keeping the building interiors warm, it did little to keep the rain out. The men used to complain that a day of rain outside, meant another day of rain inside. Only the storehouses were given more expensive shingled roofs. The NWMP apparently justified the extra cost of the shingles on the grounds that the stores would be kept dry and there would be less waste from spoilage.

Leaking roofs and damp foundations quickly began to take their toll on health and morale. Rheumatism, colds, respiratory diseases and other related side effects soon had the enlisted men reporting to the physician. At times their number would amount to almost 25 percent of the garrison and would seriously limit the effectiveness of the police force in the performance of its day-to-day duties.

At first the assistant surgeon, Dr. Richard Nevitt, dealt with the situation by establishing a tent hospital outside the walls of the post. By today's standards a tent hospital would not be very desirable, but for the NWMP the move represented one of the latest developments in nineteenth century medicine. Tent field hospitals had been first used only 15 years previously during the American Civil War. Field surgeons had found that the treatment of sick and wounded under canvas had many advantages over more permanent quarters. The patients recovered more quickly and were less susceptible to secondary infection, largely because of better ventilation and sanitation. The canvas hospital also provided the police with the added advantage of being able to quarantine the sick, another important consideration for the nineteenth century physician.

Within a year of its construction, news began to reach Fort Walsh concerning the defeat of General Custer

and the U.S. Seventh Cavalry at the battle of the Little Big Horn. Fearing reprisals by the American government, Sitting Bull and an estimated 4,000 Sioux followers fled across the border onto the southern Canadian plains. The NWMP moved quickly to control the potentially volatile situation they saw developing. They began by transferring an extra division of men from one of their northern districts to Fort Walsh. A few months later, they also moved police headquarters there so that senior officers would be able to watch the movements of the Sioux more closely.

These changes doubled the strength of the Fort Walsh garrison to 110 enlisted men and officers. They also severely constrained the already limited facilities available at the fort, particularly in the enlisted men's barracks where the space allotment averaged just 200 cubic feet per man. Leading British medical journals at the time felt that a healthy garrison required at least three times that amount of space. Unfortunately, the enlisted men had no choice but to use these cramped quarters for all household activities. Not only were the barracks their main sleeping area, but they also functioned as a dining room, washroom, and recreation hall. During the winter months when the weather confined the men to their barracks for several days at a time, the restrictive accommodation took its heaviest toll on health and morale. The close quarters became an ideal breeding ground for disease and general dissatisfaction among the rank and file.

Before long the NWMP's displeasure with their environment — and everything else for that matter — soon found expression in an excessive consumption of alcohol. It is rather ironic that the men chosen to enforce the liquor laws in the North-West Territories should find themselves breaking the same laws. After their initial success in curtailing the Montana whisky trade, the NWMP soon developed ingenious methods for obtaining their own supplies of liquor. Prohibition allowed residents of the North-West Territories to import, on an annual basis, a gallon of liquor "for medicinal purposes." If several members of the garrison put their liquor permits together, a single shipment of "medicinal" liquor went a long way in keeping all the boys in the barracks happy for sometime. In the periods between shipments, the police simply turned to the patent medicines that were being sold by the traders in the local town.

Patent medicines were the wonder drugs of the nineteenth century. Their promoters claimed they had the magic ingredients that cured any variety of therapeutic ills. Although their contents often changed from one batch to the next (unbeknown to the customer), patent medicines almost inevitably included a high narcotic — opium was still a legal substance — or alcoholic content. Patent medicines were marketed much like over-the-counter drugs are today: they could be purchased almost anywhere and without the consent of a physician. More importantly for the NWMP, patent medicines were also cheap. In this remote part of the frontier, a bottle of quality "medicinal" liquor could cost an enlisted man a full week's pay or more. But a patent medicine, which contained a higher alcohol content than beer or wine, would

sell for the equivalent of only a day's salary. Almost every social event in the Cypress Hills saw "F. Brown's Essence of Jamaica Ginger" or "Perry Davis Pain Killer" being freely consumed by the NWMP.

Senior officers, of course, did not condone such behaviour but found that there was little they could do to stop it. Officially, the orders were quite clear: if an enlisted man was found drunk off duty he would be fined \$3 — about three or four day's pay — and double that if found drunk while on duty. But when the entire garrison went on a drinking spree, as it sometimes did, the officers were almost powerless to stop it. Unofficially, they recognized that the men needed some way of relieving day-to-day tensions by living in cramped quarters with limited recreational outlets. As long as there was no violence and the men stayed out of sight of the townspeople, the officers usually turned a blind eye to the drinking.

It is no wonder then that a large part of the physician's responsibilities over the next several years were directed at lessening the crowded living conditions. The NWMP used his reports to justify expanding the fort, both in an effort to augment the existing facilities as well as to meet the changes occasioned by its new role as police headquarters. Although most of these reports were met with scepticism by the government's treasury department, the NWMP were eventually allowed to add a mess hall and library, and to expand their barracks. Unfortunately, however, the police saw little relationship between the inadequate housing and its cost on health

and morale, since many of the new structures were built in the same fashion as the original buildings.

As might be expected given such rustic conditions, physical disorders among personnel persisted and Fort Walsh started to develop quite a reputation as an unhealthy place to live. The main villain affecting the health of the NWMP was a virus known locally as "mountain fever." Today we understand that it is spread by wood ticks, but for the NWMP its origins were a complete mystery. The fever appeared with depressing regularity each summer and remained until the onset of cold weather in the late fall. In the worst stages, the symptoms were similar to typhoid and the sufferer ran the risk of a very prolonged and painful death.

But the fever was seldom fatal if properly treated in the early stages. Only one serving member of the force, Const. Alfred Tonkin, succumbed to it in the eight years that the post existed. It did, however, cause numerous deaths among the local townspeople who had less access to medical aid than the NWMP. In one outbreak William Walsh, nephew of Superintendent Walsh and an ex-member of the force living in town, and Fred Clarke, the manager of the local trading store, both died of it. The death rate among the Metis and Indians was even higher, especially among their young and old.

Ironically, Louis Pasteur had already published his findings on bacteria, but the medical profession — particularly in faraway outposts like Fort Walsh — was slow to adopt his findings. Most practitioners still held two

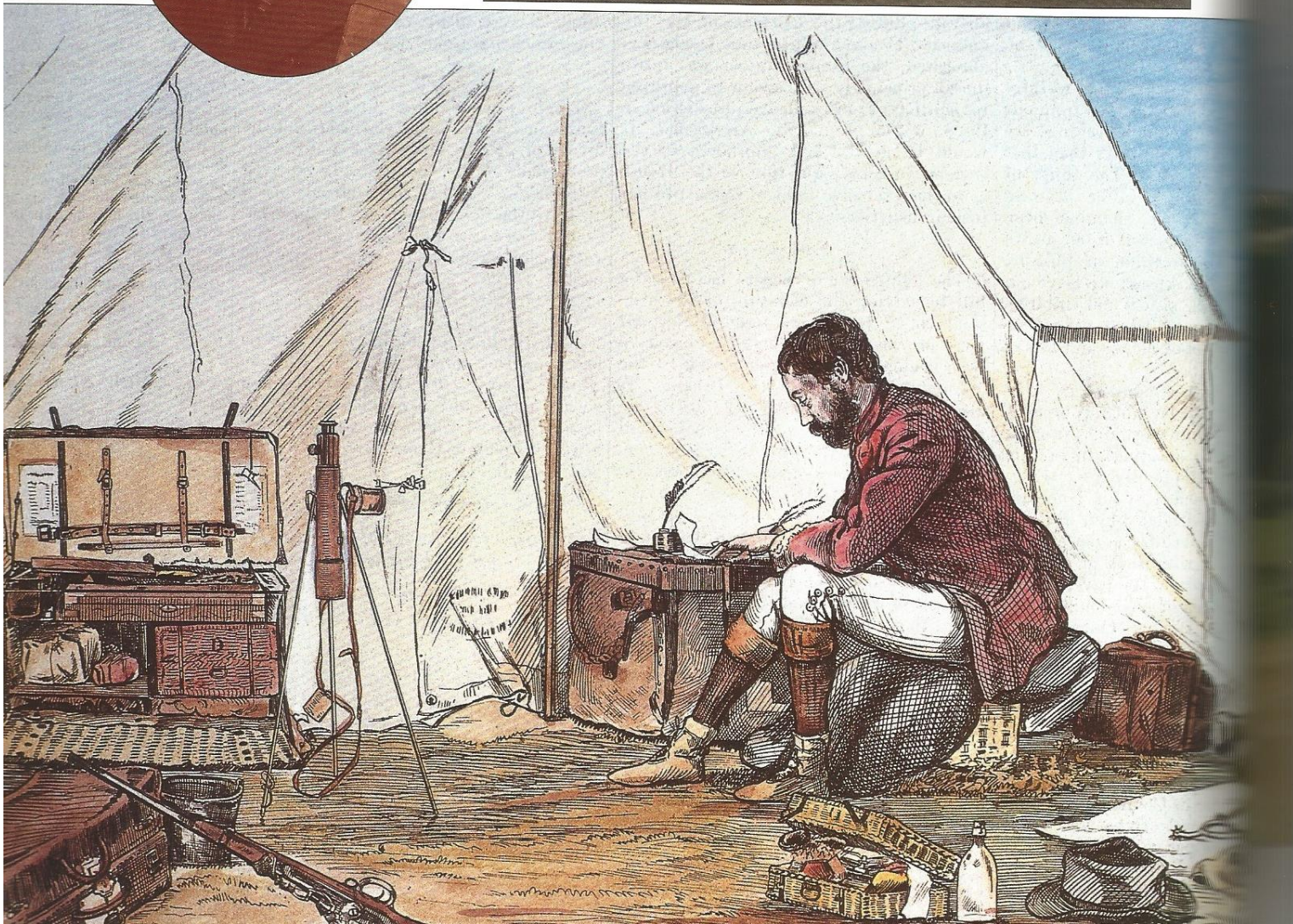
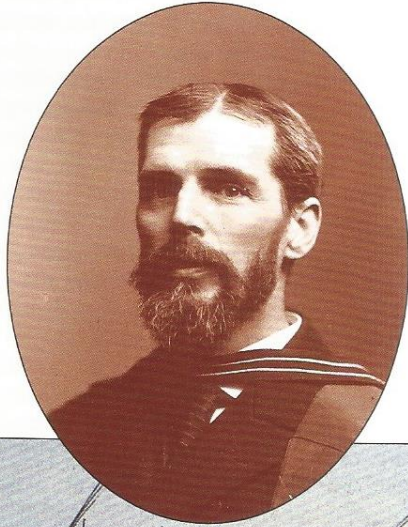
Inadequate housing was a constant source of health problems for all ranks at Fort Walsh. During the summer months, the Mounties actually preferred living in tents over their barracks rooms.

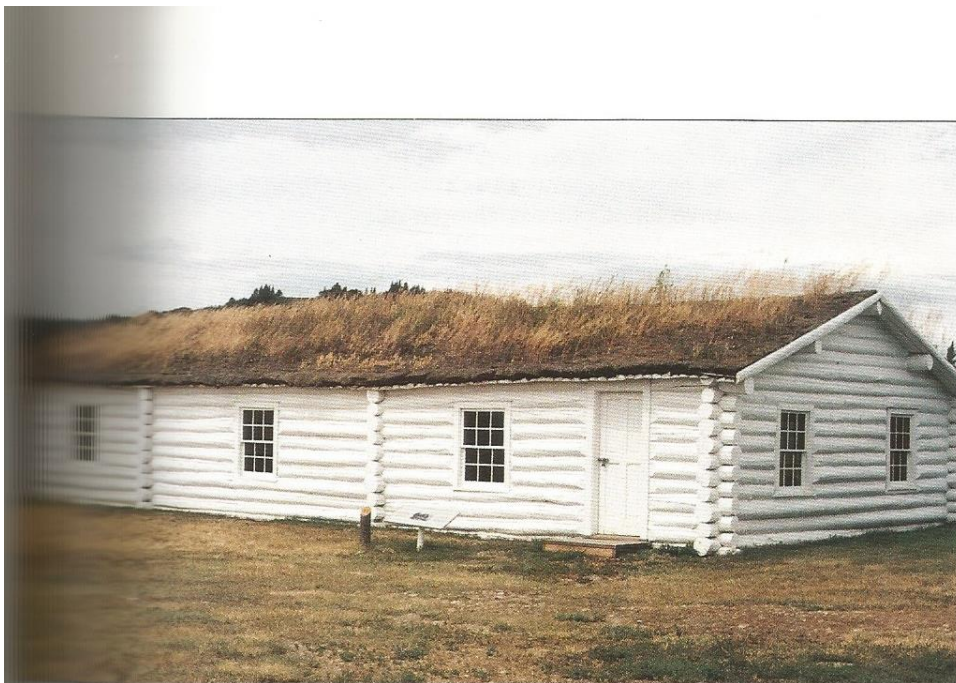


(Right) Cheap patent medicines with a high alcohol or narcotic content were popular drinks with the enlisted men at Fort Walsh. Some of the more common brands included (from left to right): Ayer's Sarsaparilla, F. Brown's Essence of Jamaica Ginger, and Stanton's Pain Relief.

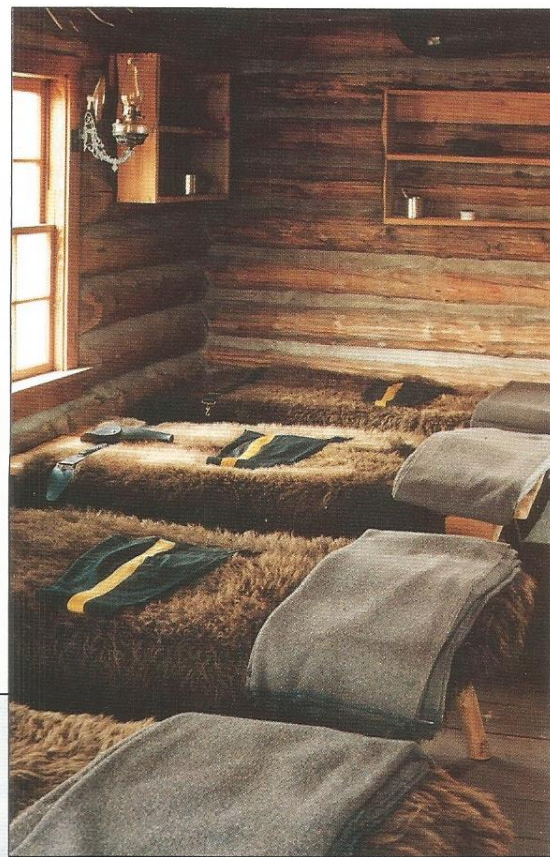
(Below) A native of Athens, Georgia, Dr. Richard B. Nevitt came to Canada to escape the American Civil War. After training at Trinity Medical School in Toronto, he enlisted with the Mounties as an assistant surgeon for \$1,000 annually.

(Bottom) Dr. Richard Nevitt in a hospital tent.





*(Above) Exterior view of NCO's barracks, Fort Walsh, in 1990. This building, with its sod roof, is the most authentically reconstructed building in the fort.
(Right) The cramped interior of the NCO's barracks.
(Below) A view of Fort Walsh from about halfway to Farwell's Post in 1990.*



basic assumptions about how diseases originated. The first recognized that some diseases, like smallpox and plague, were capable of spreading from one person to the next, not by an organism, but rather as a general emanation from an affected body. Many other illnesses, such as malaria, were recognized as endemic to particular climates or areas. They were thought to be miasmatic in origin — that is, the result of impurities in the air. It was often held that the two forms were interrelated because general contagion might build to dangerous levels with even healthy bodies if sufficient numbers were crowded together without proper ventilation.

In keeping with this philosophy, the Fort Walsh physicians regularly attempted to clean the barracks of their "bad air." At the first onset of good weather, the men would be moved outside into tents. Sometimes they camped just outside the main gate, other times they would be moved as much as two or three miles away to a neighbouring coulee where a fresh supply of drinking water could be guaranteed.

While the men were under canvas, the barracks' floors would be raised, the ground allowed to dry, and the floor replaced with new boards. Usually the roofs were also repaired or completely rebuilt. Every attempt was also made to introduce proper ventilation to the barracks by installing windows in the back walls. At one point, they even relocated the north palisade to allow a better circulation around the fort compound.

The rooms were also fumigated with burning sulphur and the walls whitewashed with a new coating of white clay. Although the burning sulphur probably had little effect on the quality of the air, it at least killed the wood ticks. However, the results were short lived. As soon as new firewood was brought back into the barracks, the insects would be reintroduced and the problem started all over again. The fact that the men slept on straw mattresses and used buffalo robes for bedding did not alleviate the situation. Both items were ideal breeding environments for insect pests.

Because of their concern with "bad air" and cleanliness, the Fort Walsh physicians were constantly on the lookout for infractions that might lead to the spread of sickness. It was not unusual for the surgeon to call for a routine inspection of the post. The results of these inspections, as recorded in archival documents, reveal something of the blasé attitude the men had towards their own sanitation. In one such inspection the physician was appalled at the personal hygiene of the enlisted men and "found the necessity to strongly recommend some of the members of the troop, to wash themselves all over at least once a week with plenty of soap and water." In another instance, Surgeon Kittson traced an outbreak of sickness at the post to a "noxious cesspool" that was found "in a blind alley. . . where the sergeants' mess cook was in the habit of throwing slops, vegetable garbage, etc. The first victims of the fever were the sergeants' mess waiter and an 'E' Division man in the adjoining building, who complained that a bad smell came from beneath the floor in the corner where his bunk stood."

Despite the best efforts of the physicians, ill health

continued to torment the rank and file throughout the full eight years that Fort Walsh existed. Perhaps then it was only natural that, in their frustration to find the source for the illness, the physicians began to look for causes "outside" the police force. In one medical report Dr. Kennedy traced an outbreak of mountain fever at Fort Walsh to a member of the NWMP who had returned to the post after a three month furlough. In another report, the health record seems to have improved slightly, but Dr. Kennedy attributed their good fortune to improvements he had enacted in the local town. Apparently, he had visited the town in the early spring and had compelled the civilians "to remove and burn all refuse matter and offal which had collected around their premises. . . ."

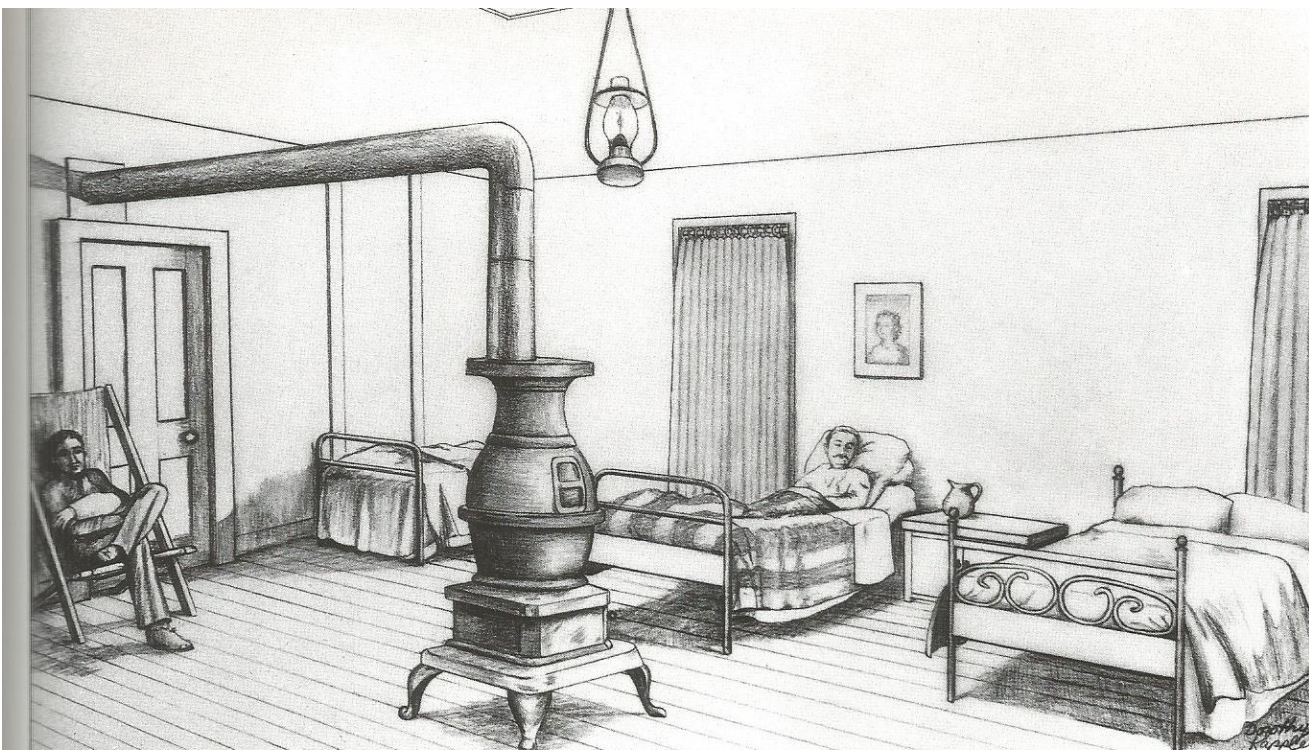
This, of course, does not mean that the police ignored their own infractions with regard to sanitary practices but it does seem that, wherever possible, the NWMP were quick to explain some of their problems in terms that clearly implicated outside sources. In examples where health problems of the force are mentioned, these are almost always contrasted to situations outside the post in the local frontier community. Inevitable the discussion implies that, although the NWMP's health may not be good, the situation was far worse in the civilian communities where dirt, filth, and pollution were thought to be far more prevalent.

This "metaphoric" use for disease by the NWMP becomes all the more noticeable in their attempt to explain the exceedingly rapid spread of venereal disease among the ranks. The physician's official reports to Parliament openly recognized that syphilis had probably caused the force "more trouble, vexation, and loss of time than any other disease." The outbreak was not attributed to the moral conduct of the men but instead, to their contact with local frontier groups. ". . . A feature in the medical history of the past year," he wrote, "is the introduction of syphilis among the men. . . . It was brought over from the other side of the line (the international border) by the Cree and Assiniboine camps on their return here a year ago."

Other unofficial accounts, however, such as this report by an ex-member of the force published in the *Manitoba Daily Free Press*, contradict the surgeon's assessment of the origins of the disease:

"Now, I know a chap out there who's very bad with the loathsome disease. The doctor reported against him but he was sworn in all the same. There's a lot of them like that in the force, and they spread disease among the Indians. Nothing of the sort was known here before the advent of the Mounted Police. I know one man against whose swearing in Doctor Kennedy sent a strong protest, saying that he was totally unfit for duty. He was very far gone with a similar disease, but he was sworn in, and when I left was acting as cook at Fort Walsh."

Whether civilian sources really were a significant source for the poor health record affecting the NWMP cannot be objectively assessed from the available records. Minimally, it would appear that whatever infractions could be attributed to the frontier were also common within the police force. What is important, however, is that the NWMP at least perceived a direct relationship



An artist's reconstruction of one of the Fort Walsh hospital wards.

between the townspeople and the filth that was fundamental to the sicknesses affecting the force. The implication underlying this analogy is quite clear: Fort Walsh was unhealthy because of the dirt and filth with which members of the force came into contact, and it was the frontiersmen and natives who carried the "dirt." By extension, the frontiersmen were also considered "dirty," but not so much in the physical sense as the social. In other words, diseases and sickness seems to have been used by the police to draw social distinctions between themselves and the outside frontier community.

By 1881 the health situation at Fort Walsh had deteriorated to the point that the NWMP had decided to build themselves a new hospital. For the last three years they had been using a section of the superintendent's residence but it was far too small and suffered from many of the same problems as any other residential building. The new structure the NWMP built for themselves was located outside the main fort compound, at the ford which crossed Spring Creek to the town-site. By isolating the hospital between the fort and the town, the police were able to quarantine serious cases from both communities. It also meant that civilians would be able to use the facility without entering the garrison or being involved with members of the force, except perhaps those who had already been admitted under the care of the physician.

Constructed over a two month period in late 1881 at a cost of \$250, the hospital was often described as a "cheerful, airy and commodious" building. It was a three-roomed structure that measured about 40 feet by 15 feet, making it one of the largest buildings at Fort Walsh. Two of the rooms were probably used as wards and the third as an office or examining area. A much smaller 12 foot by 10 foot annex was attached to the back of the structure and served as the steward's room and kitchen.

Whether or not the new hospital might have been a success will never be known because the NWMP's use of

the building was short lived. Only eight months after its construction, government officials decided to abandon Fort Walsh. They were going to leave their health problems behind and start over again. The garrison was to be reduced in size, a move which would help to alleviate some of the problems associated with overcrowding. Headquarters staff were removed to Regina — which had just become the territorial capital. The remainder of the garrison was divided between Maple Creek and Medicine Hat, two new towns that had been built in response to the newly constructed Canadian Pacific Railway.

From the start, the NWMP had always considered Fort Walsh important enough to have its own medical facility. It must be remembered that this was an era when most western communities seldom had access to a physician let alone a complete hospital. When one considers that the police usually had to forgo many of the niceties that nineteenth century life normally offered, the medical facility at Fort Walsh provided an interesting contrast to the harsh realities of frontier life.

It is interesting to speculate what might have happened to the NWMP if the facility was not available to them. No doubt their health problems would have been more drastic and their performance as a law enforcement agency might have been seriously affected. However, one can not help but think that the facility should not have been necessary if the police were willing to pay more attention to their own basic needs, particularly in the area of housing. If the NWMP had been less stoic about their accommodation and prepared proper places in which to live, their health problems would not have been nearly as catastrophic. On the same note, if the police had been less willing to blame their poor health record on other people, they might have been able to identify some of the sources behind their problems. At any rate, a study of the Fort Walsh medical facility provides a rare perspective on the day-to-day lives of those serving in this remote corner of Canadian civilization. It also offers some unique and intriguing glimpses into the formative years of modern medicine.

JERRY POTTS

FRONTIER SCOUT

Equally at home in the composed council teepees of the Blackfoot Indians or the whisky-soaked, scurrilous saloons of the white man's frontier towns, Potts could track like a bloodhound, fight like an Indian, swear like a trooper, shoot like a hired gunslinger, and drink like the proverbial fish.

He was in reality one of those independent, laconic and disturbingly mysterious men of the all too often stereotyped hero of a western novel or Hollywood movie. He was the classic loner.

HE has been described as the greatest scout and guide of the old West, one without equal on either the Canadian or American plains. Although accurate, this description does not entirely depict a man who was one of the most important and colourful characters of the Canadian northwest during its infancy of settlement in the last decades of the 19th century.

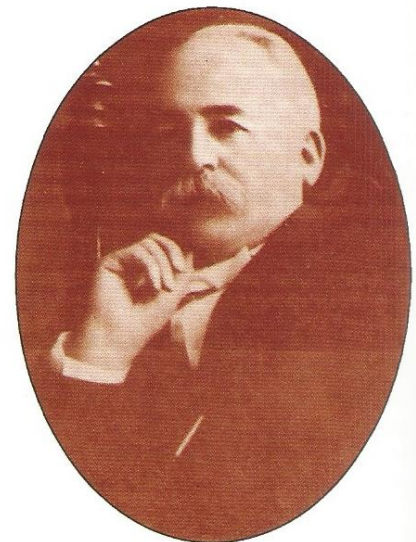
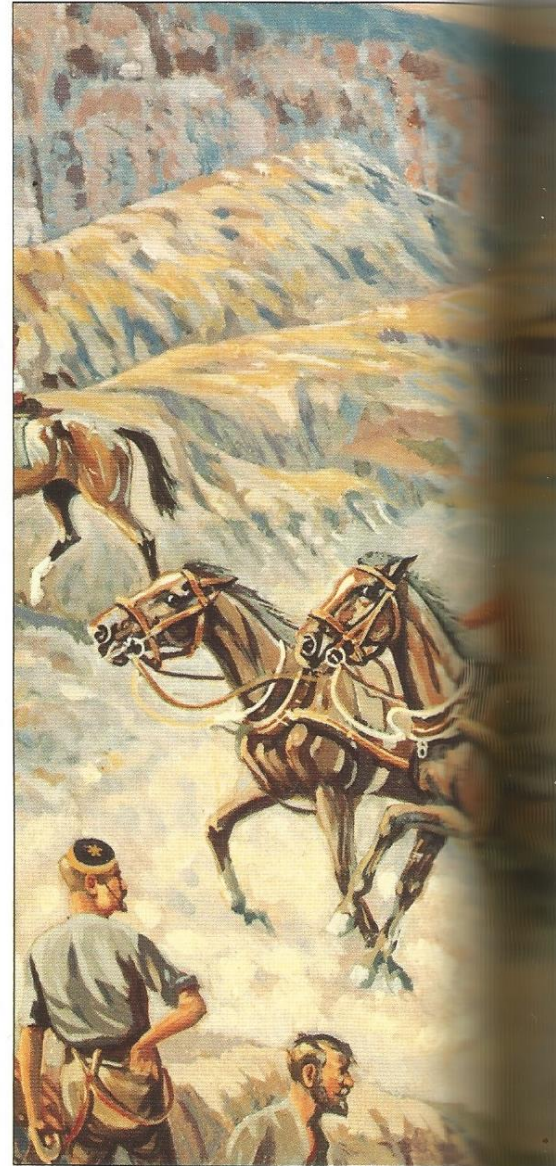
Yet he is not as famous as most of his contemporaries. Kit Carson led expeditions through the uncharted wilderness of Nevada and California, but he never did it in a blinding snowstorm. This man did. Wild Bill Hickok could pull his six-gun and shoot the centre of a silver dollar thrown in the air, but he never trimmed his moustache with bullets. This man did. Buffalo Bill Cody had a Wild West show filled with "wild" Indians like Sitting Bull, but he never knew the great Sioux chief when he was really wild. This man did.

Jeremiah Potts, Kyi-Yo-Kos (Bear Child), was born at Fort Mackenzie, on the upper Missouri River in Montana, about 1840. His Scottish father, Andrew R. Potts, was a clerk with the American Fur Company (AFC); his mother, Namo-pisi (Crooked Back) was a young Blood Indian.

Unfortunately, Jerry never had much opportunity to get to know his father. When Jerry was two years old, a surly Peigan named One-Eye murdered his dad, mistaking him for another white upon whom he wanted revenge. Andrew Potts had always treated the Indians with kindness and in fairness, and the other Indians, enraged by the senseless killing, executed One-Eye.

Now alone, Crooked Back took up with Alexander Harvey, a man with a somewhat distasteful reputation, who reluctantly accepted Jerry as his "son." Harvey was indeed a charmer. On one occasion when a Blackfoot stole a pig from the fort, Harvey pursued the Indian and shot him in the leg. He then strolled up to the wounded man, passed him a pipe and invited him to have a smoke. Harvey then coolly blew the man's brains out.

On another occasion, a black slave belonging to Harvey's friend Francis Chadron, who was then in command of the fort, was killed by Indians. Although they were uncertain who had committed the murder, Chadron and





(Above) "Crossing the Dirt Hills," a painting of the march of the NWMP to Fort Macleod in 1874. The artist was Henri Julien, who accompanied the expedition and made several sketches of the hardships they endured.

(Left) Alfred Hamilton. In 1869 he and John Healy built Fort Hamilton, a whisky trading post, at the junction of the St. Mary and Belly (now Oldman) rivers. When they left for Fort Benton in the summer of 1870, the post was burned to the ground. One account says it was destroyed accidentally, while a second says it was deliberately burned by Indians.

(Right) The I.G. Baker general store in Fort Benton, Montana. Jerry Potts was working for this firm when he was offered to the NWMP as a scout when they straggled into town tired in 1874.



Harvey devised a treacherous scheme against the Blackfoot. Concealing a cannon among trade goods, they waited for the Indians to approach. Fortunately, the Indians became suspicious, and Harvey was forced to fire into a much smaller crowd than he had hoped, killing only three.

The result of this devious attack had long lasting effect. The Blackfoot became hostile and their incessant attacks throughout the summer forced the traders to abandon Fort Mackenzie, which was then burned to the ground. Harvey left the upper Missouri in 1845 and young Jerry was without a "father" yet again.

The following year the AFC built a new fort near where Fort Mackenzie had stood. This new post, named Fort Louis, soon came to be known as Fort Benton. To this newest fort came the newest manager of the AFC's frontier posts — Andrew Dawson, an educated and gentle Scotsman. After Harvey's departure from the northwest, Jerry Potts had remained with the traders as an orphan ward, moving with the men from post to post. Dawson adopted young Potts and cared for him as if he were his own son. As Potts grew through boyhood the kindly Scotsman taught him all the values he had not learned from Harvey.

It is not clear where Pott's mother was at this time, but Crooked Back had probably returned to her people very soon after she realized just how evil a man Harvey was. Under Dawson's patient and instructive care Potts received a semblance of education and, more importantly, learned the ins and outs of the fur trade business and the ways of the frontier. He became well-versed in the ways of both whites and Indians. In his travels with his foster father he learned to speak several Indian languages which included, besides his native Blackfoot, Cree, Sioux and Crow.

By 1850 Potts had rejoined his mother's people in southern Alberta, just north of the U.S.-Canada border. He spent the next several years among the Blackfoot learning their ways and showing that he was very much an Indian. As he lived and travelled with the Bloods he became proficient with bow and arrow and a crack shot with a rifle. He also became an excellent tracker and honed to perfection what in later years would prove to be an almost supernatural sense of direction.

As he grew into manhood Potts became very religious in Blackfoot ways and steadfastly loyal to their customs and traditions.

Although he belonged to two races his first allegiance was to the Indians and he would always show a preference to their way of life. However, Potts discovered that there were some ways of the white man also worthy of attention, and he enthusiastically adopted many of the raucous and carefree ways of the unbridled frontier. Between the sedated, sagacious council teepees of the Blackfoot and the raw, wild trading posts of the whites, Potts learned the best and worst of both worlds.

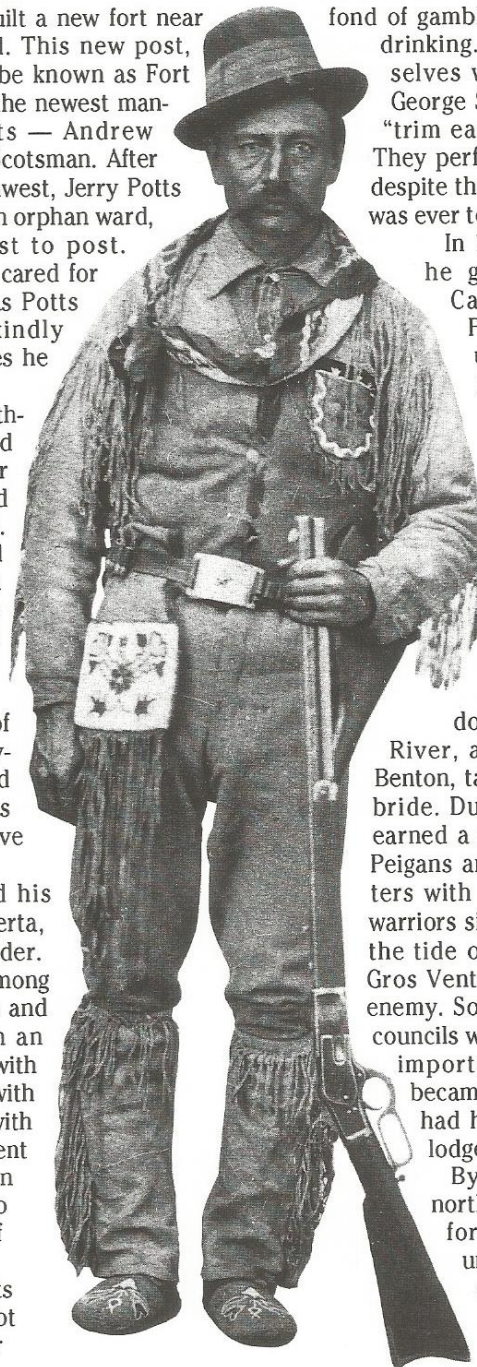
At Fort Benton he was schooled in the rough and ready ways of the lawless frontier, soon acquiring both the skills and the vices of the frontiersmen. He grew fond of gambling and downright religious about drinking. Sometimes, after fortifying themselves with whisky, Potts and his friend George Star would step into the street and "trim each other's moustache" with lead. They performed this "trick" many times and despite their inebriated condition neither man was ever touched by a bullet.

In 1860, when Potts was 20 years old, he got in a quarrel with a French Canadian named Antoine Primeau. Primeau learned too late that the unimposing Potts was not to be fooled with. After the smoke cleared from the one-on-one duel, Primeau was dead. This gunfight established Potts reputation as a fighter among the tough frontiersmen of the upper Missouri country and few men would rile him, especially when he was drinking.

When the AFC folded in 1864, after 40 years of operation, Potts realized his days of fur trading and prospecting were over. He settled down with the Peigans on the Marias River, about 50 miles northwest of Fort Benton, taking an 18-year-old Crow girl as his bride. During the next several years Potts earned a reputation as a warrior among the Peigans and Bloods. In two separate encounters with hostile Indians, Potts killed seven warriors single-handedly. In another, he turned the tide of a battle against Assiniboine and Gros Ventre by killing a large number of the enemy. Soon he was asked to sit in on tribal councils where his advice and opinions were of importance to the band. Before long he became a sub-chief among the Peigans and had his own small band of eight or nine lodges on the Marias River.

By this time most of the Indians of northern Montana and southern Alberta, fortified with firewater, were making unrelenting and merciless war on one another. The situation was so bad by

Jerry Potts: scout, guide, interpreter and general hell-raiser with the NWMP



1868 that the U.S. Army moved into the area in an attempt to stop the illegal trade in guns and whisky. Within a year they had considerably curtailed the illicit traffic south of the border. Unfortunately, the whisky traders simply moved across the boundary line where the army had no jurisdiction.

They came first in wagons, parking on the open plains and waiting for the Indians to come to them. At first they traded their wares over an open tailgate, but soon found that a drunken Indian refused more whisky became very dangerous, even deadly. In these early days more than one trader was found dead beside his looted wagon. In 1869 the traders began to build forts.

The first one to go up was at the strategic confluence of the Belly and St. Mary's rivers. It was built by two Montanians, John Healy and A.B. Hamilton. Consisting of a semi-circle of crude log huts connected by a flimsy picket fence, Fort Hamilton was not much of an improvement over an open tailgate of a wagon, and Indians burned it to the ground shortly after it opened.

Undeterred, Healy and Hamilton rebuilt it with heavy rectangular logs. Two bastions, each armed with a brass cannon, were erected on diagonal corners. Such an ambitious and illustrious a fort as Whoop-Up, as Fort Hamilton came to be called, needed the services of an accomplished and competent guide and hunter. By this time Potts' reputation was known far and wide in the north-west, and in 1869 he was hired to work at the whisky post.

At Fort Whoop-Up Potts was kept busy supplying fresh meat for the 30 or more traders that came and went. Daily he watched the Indians come to the fort with their piles of buffalo hides and shove them through the wickets for their trade goods. In exchange the Blackfoot received tobacco, salt, sugar, flour, tea, axes, knives, blankets, calico and trinkets such as wire, beads, and silver ornaments. They also received repeating rifles and firewater. These last two were to prove a deadly combination.

Firewater, a vile concoction, was a foul and often fatal brew that the traders passed off as whisky. The staple recipe called for a quart of watered whisky, a pound of chewing tobacco, a handful of red pepper, a bottle of Jamaica ginger, and either a quart of blackstrap molasses or red ink to give the desired colour for either rum or whisky. This brew was poured into a large pot and heated to make it potent. The impact of this poison had on the Indians was horrendous.

Firewater was destroying the Blackfoot as a people, turning once proud and fearless warriors into a race of whisky-sodden, skulking beggars. The country became unsafe for any man, red or white, and they all killed each other with mutual malice. During the winter of 1871-72, some 70 Bloods were killed in drunken fights by their own relatives.

Potts was never one to do things by halves — not even when it came to marriage. When his first wife, Mary, left him to return to his people, he married two sisters, Panther Woman and Spotted Killer. When they died during the 1869-70 smallpox epidemic, he married another Crow woman named Long Time Lying Down. Though

most of his many children died at an early age, at least two sons, Joe and Charlie, survived. Their descendants in southern Alberta and Montana carry on the proud blood lines of the formidable little frontiersman.

In the spring of 1872 Potts' mother and half-brother were brutally murdered by an Indian named Good Young Man. It was several months before Potts heard of the killing. For two months, in the calculating way of the Indian, he brooded and planned his revenge. One day Potts spotted Good Young Man and another Indian riding on a single horse near Fort Pitt. Getting his rifle, he set off in pursuit. Good Young Man spotted Potts and spurred the horse on, but the overburdened mount was no match for a lone rider. Potts soon overtook them and killed his mother's murderer.

Shortly after this incident Potts quit the whisky forts and returned to Montana. Disgusted by the havoc the traders and their firewater were having on his people, he never worked for them again.

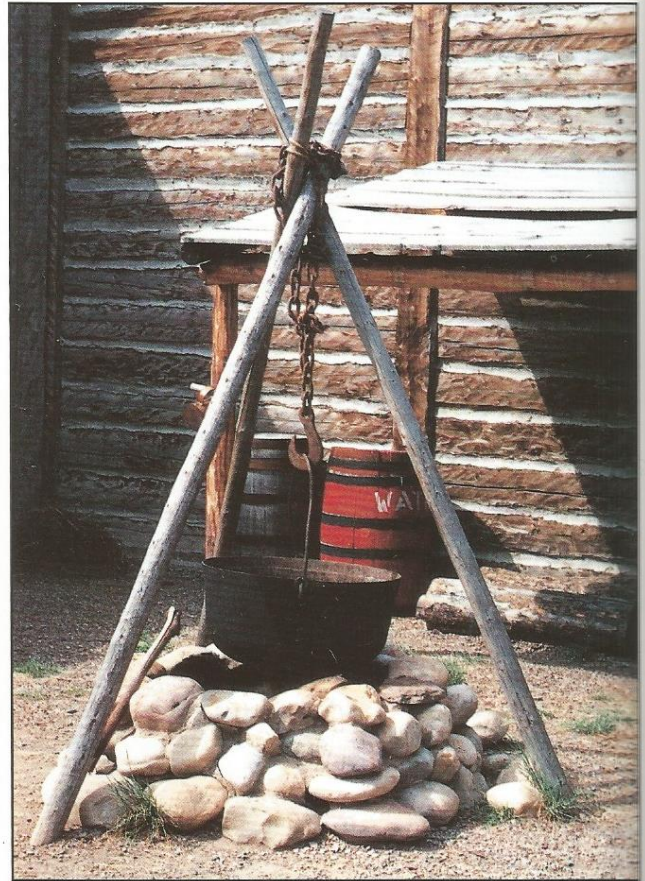
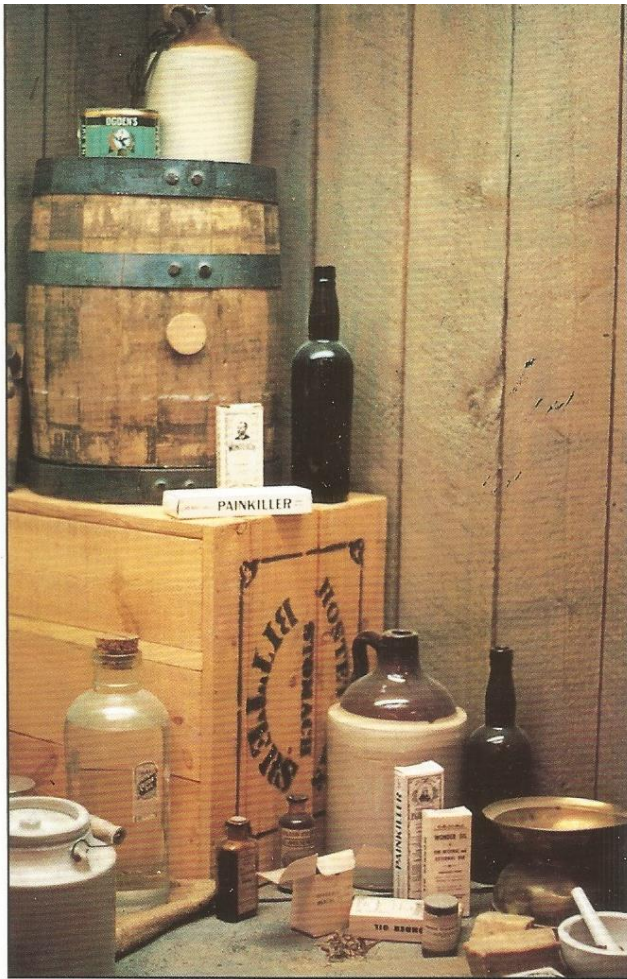
Meanwhile, word of the whisky traders and their evil ways was filtering back to eastern Canada and action was demanded. Unfortunately, as politicians argued and procrastinated, rough and lawless men continued their unchecked ways on the plains of the west. The decision to establish a police force had already been made when the Cypress Hills massacre occurred on June 1, 1873, but it gave impetus to its formation. By that October parliament had passed the bill authorizing the formation of the North West Mounted Police (NWMP). However, it was not until June 6, 1874, that the force was ready to head west on its historic march.

Heading up the NWMP was Lt.-Col. George French, with Col. James Macleod his second-in-command. Throughout the winter months of 1873-74, French and Macleod recruited and trained 300 men who would take the Queen's law to the western plains and impose it on whites and Indians alike.

From Toronto to Dufferin in Manitoba the travel was easy, most of it being done on American railroads. The 800-mile march from Manitoba to Whoop-Up, however, which began on July 8, was much more difficult. The logistics of such a march were staggering. After going only three miles some of the men had second thoughts and several of them deserted. Poor rations, prepared by inexperienced cooks, did little to encourage men who suffered from heat which daily averaged about 90 degrees.

A week or so after their start the police were assaulted by a plague of grasshoppers and, for a day by hailstones "as large as walnuts." Forage for the horses was by now almost impossible to find and each day the men's rations grew worse. Adding to their misery was the "infernal" dust that caked them as they travelled over the parched, treeless plains. As the weeks passed, the march became a gruelling trek through dusty, hot, waterless wilderness.

By late September the column had reached the Sweetgrass Hills, where they found water, wood, grass and shelter, and both stock and men recuperated quickly. But their Metis guides refused to go any farther into Blackfoot country and the Mounties found themselves



(Above left) A display of some of the items used in the whisky recipe at Fort Whoop-Up.

(Above right) The often lethal concoction the whites passed off as whisky, were mixed in this large pot and boiled over a fire.

(Below) An original 6-pounder cannon from the original Fort Whoop-Up is now displayed in the reconstructed fort. Another original Fort Whoop-Up cannon is displayed at Fort Macleod.



stranded and, essentially, lost.

On September 22, French and Macleod took a small party and headed south to Fort Benton for supplies. But supplies were not all that was required; because of their desperate situation in the Sweetgrass Hills, they were in dire need of a guide. As luck would have it, one of the best, Jerry Potts, just happened to be available. However, when the short, bow-legged, slope-shouldered little man with the bowler hat walked in the door, French was not very impressed. Still, they were in no position to be critical, so, reluctantly, they hired Potts for \$90 a month.

With fresh supplies and their guide, the small party returned to the Sweetgrass Hills. There, French took half the force and continued northeast into Saskatchewan country where he would establish the force headquarters at Swan River. Macleod took command of the remainder of the force with orders to proceed to Fort Whoop-Up, expel the whisky traders, and establish a western outpost.

On October 4 the force rode out of the Sweetgrass Hills led by Potts, who rode far ahead of the column. At noon, when they reached Milk River, the troops found their guide on the riverbank with a dressed buffalo car-

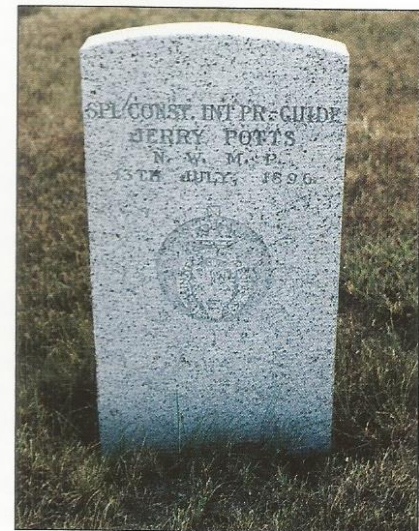
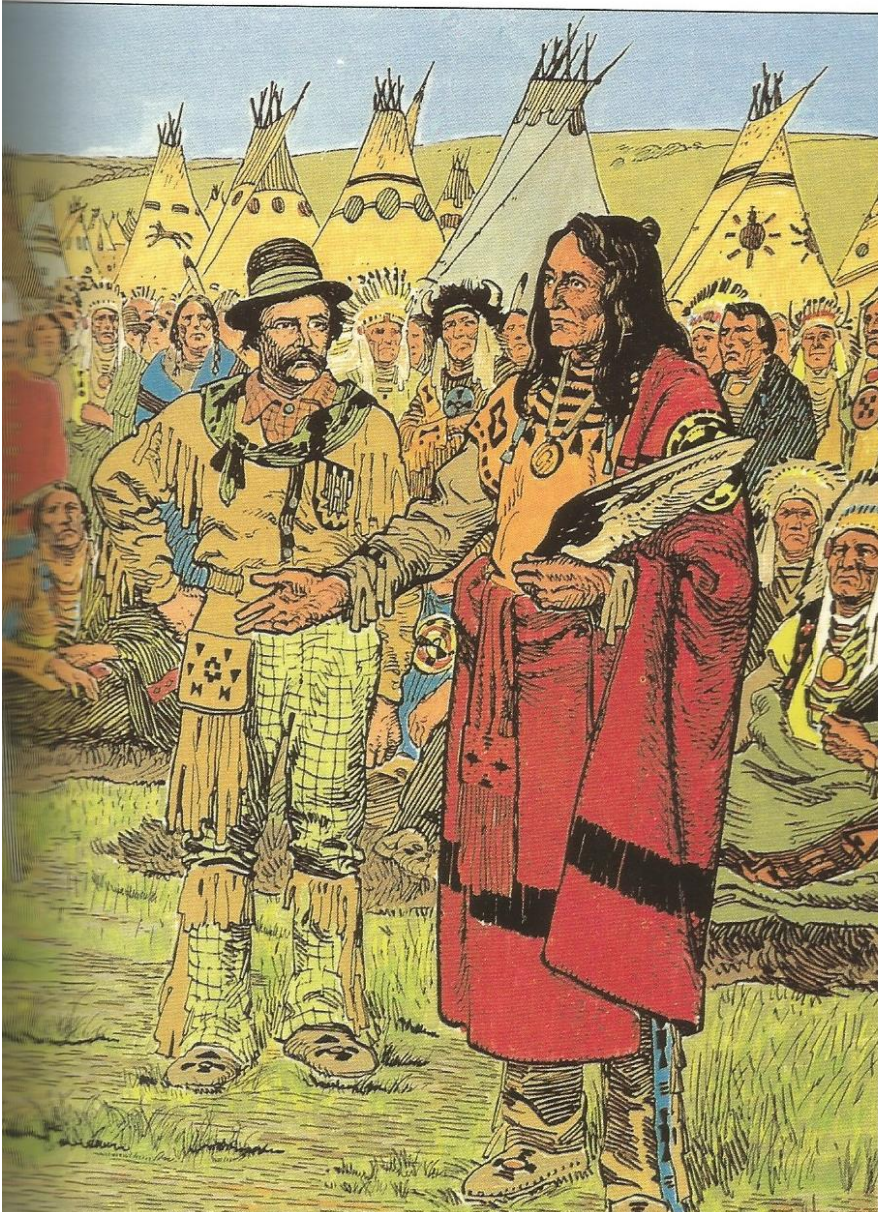
cass for supper. The next day Potts led the column sharply to the northwest. At one point they intercepted a couple of wagons being driven by Americans who were headed back from Whoop-Up country. Macleod searched the wagons but found only buffalo robes. That night Potts led the men to a campsite with plenty of grass, firewood and some of the best spring water in the country.

During the night the policemen slept fitfully as a mysterious rumbling could be heard all through the night. When they awoke they found themselves surrounded by a great herd of buffalo. Men grabbed their rifles as they rolled out of their blankets, but Potts warned them not stampede the animals by firing. Quietly breaking camp the troopers formed up their columns and Potts led them in a waving caravan through the dense rolling sea of brown hides. It was not until later that day that they had left the herd and were again on the open prairie.

The NWMP soon learned that their guide was a man of very few words. At one point a bone-weary officer, thinking that they must be nearing Fort Whoop-Up, asked Potts what they would find over the next hill. "Nudder damn hill," was the reply.

On another occasion, the NWMP came across the bullet-riddled body of a scalped Assiniboine, lying beside the trail. Macleod asked Potts what he thought had happened. In his classic laconic style Potts explained with one word: "Drunk." Macleod knew he had to be satisfied with this brief explanation.

A few days later the NWMP reached Fort Whoop-Up. The palisaded post with its loop-holed blockhouses was an impressive



(Above) The grave-site of Jerry Potts in the cemetery at Fort Macleod. The original wooden marker is now on display at Fort Macleod.

(Left) Jerry Potts acting as interpreter between the NWMP and Chief Crowfoot.

sight to Macleod. Although the fort was strangely quiet, Macleod believed it to be full of whisky traders who were lying in ambush for him. So, after deploying his men in battle positions, Macleod asked Potts to accompany him to the post.

Reaching the gates the policeman pounded on the heavy wood. Slowly the thick doors swung back and a goateed old man poked his shaggy head out. Instead of being met with resistance, Macleod was extended an invitation for supper. Their host was Dave Akers, who, except for a couple of Blackfoot squaws, was alone at the post. The whisky traders, having got advance warning of the approaching troops, had fled the country.

The next assignment for the NWMP was to find a suitable site for a post. When asked, Potts said he knew just the place, and led the troops 30 miles northwest to an island in the Oldman River. The island was about 600 acres in size, large enough to hold the fort and graze the horses and cattle the policemen had with them. The island was also strategically located near an important river crossing of the Blackfoot.

By the fall of 1874, Fort Macleod, as the new post was named, was completed. During November, Potts travelled to the scattered camps of the Bloods, Peigans and Blackfoot, explaining the presence of the NWMP and gaining assurances from the Indians that they would deal with the police in peace. At the end of the month, a small group of Peigans visited the post. Macleod, delighted that some Indians had finally showed up, received them with all the pomp and ceremony of his office, then herded them into his quarters.

Potts was summoned to interpret the proceedings. The Indians, in their characteristic style, expounded at length. Macleod, in his eagerness, found their longwindedness almost trying, but he sat in patience and endured their almost endless tirade. Finally the Indians were finished and, with relief and expectation, Macleod turned to Potts and asked him what they had said. Potts, with typical brevity, summed up the whole of the Indians' speech in five words: "Dey damn glad you're here."

On another occasion in the early 1880s, after most of the buffalo had vanished from the plains, a hungry band of Peigans came to Fort Macleod. Their chief spent a good half hour explaining their needs. Potts boiled the speech down to three words. "Dey want grub," he told a startled Macleod.

It was during the winter of 1874-75 that Potts showed the NWMP another of his *seemingly unlimited skills*, one which completely amazed them by its uncanniness, and contributed to making him a legend as the best scout and guide on the prairies, both north and south of the border.

Early in February, 1875, Potts was assigned to guide Inspector Crozier and 10 men to the Bow River where they were to arrest some American whisky traders who had a cache in the area. From the time the party left Fort Macleod they experienced bad weather. It was so cold that Sgt. W.D. Antrobus, who kept a record of the journey, commented: "Even Jerry Potts, although he remained rolled up in his blankets, did not sleep at all."

Through storm after storm, never once hesitating

because he was unsure of the way, Potts led the NWMP to a small cabin on Lee Creek. After the three men were placed under arrest, the party headed back to Macleod.

On the return journey the party ran into a severe snowstorm in which visibility was at times no more than 100 feet. "We could not be guided by the wind," Antrobus reported, "because it did not blow five minutes at a time from the same direction." As the storm worsened the party became separated, with Potts in one group and Antrobus in another. Within minutes Antrobus was lost and decided to wait out the storm. In a matter of moments his tracks were obliterated. He could not see more than 30 yards away. The sergeant had almost resigned himself and his men to certain death when, through the swirling snow, they saw Potts, trudging through the drifts toward them. With Potts leading, they rejoined the other group which the scout had instructed to stay put. Wasting no time, Potts set out across the snow-screened plains southward, where he struck the Highwood River at a point not a mile above the site where they had camped on their way north to Lee Creek.

How Potts could have accomplished such a feat the NWMP were at a loss to explain. Yet, in his years with the force, he repeated such feats over and over again. Sam Steele, with whom Potts worked closely for many years, perhaps explained it as well as anyone could: "He possessed an uncanny sense of locality and direction. Others could guide travellers through country they had visited before, but this man could take a party from place to place by the quickest route, through country altogether unknown to him, without compass and without sight of the stars. Unlike other guides, he never talked with others when he was at work. He would ride on ahead by himself, keeping his mind fixed on the mysterious business of finding the way. He was never able to give any clear explanation of his method. Some mysterious power, perhaps a heritage from his Indian ancestors, was at work."

Macleod listened intently about Potts' accomplishment, but passed off much of their enthusiasm as being an overreaction to their recent ordeal. The following month, however, Macleod was to learn the truth for himself.

Macleod was instructed to go to Helena, Montana, to pick up the payroll. Going to Helena, located 120 miles southwest of Fort Benton, meant travelling through territory Potts knew nothing about. On March 15 the five-man party left Fort Macleod with packhorses loaded with blankets, tea, bacon and hardtack — but no tent. Spring was just around the corner and the men were in high spirits.

The men spent the first night at Fort Whoop-Up before leaving the next morning. Around noon the party stopped to eat and rest about halfway to Milk River. As they finished eating the sky began to cloud in and it looked like bad weather was heading their way. Hurriedly, they packed up and pushed on. With dusk the storm suddenly unleashed itself with a fury. A stiff, icy wind blew down from the north and as the party reached Milk River they were enveloped in a raging blizzard.

All that night, as the men crowded into a shallow snow cave, the blizzard howled and swirled around

them. They were to learn later that the temperature dipped to -65 degrees Fahrenheit that night. The men slept little if any that night, and when they awoke in the morning the storm was still raging. After a second miserable, sleepless night, the dawn found the storm as ferocious as ever.

Macleod and the others looked to their guide for direction. Potts said that the storm could last another couple of days and their supply of bacon and hardtack was almost gone. They had two choices: they could stay where they were and die in the snow cave, or try to reach Rocky Coulee, about 20 miles to the south. There, Potts told them, they would at least find better shelter and probably, firewood. Macleod decided that this was no time to begin having doubts about his staunch little guide.

Crawling from their cave, the men set out on foot dragging their exhausted, nearly frozen horses behind them. After about a quarter of a mile they mounted their horses. The storm continued to lash them as Potts pushed on ahead, the policemen following his tracks, trusting completely to his instincts. "Our guide was a marvel," Cecil Denny would say later. "He rode steadily ahead with short stops at intervals when he seemed almost to smell out the trail, for nothing was to be seen in any direction." Towards evening the storm abated a little and ahead the men saw a deep gash in the prairie. Minutes later they rode directly into Rocky Coulee, the spot Potts had been headed for. There, they spent another hungry, fireless and miserable night, but the shelter was better than it had been at Milk River.

By morning the blizzard had almost blown itself out and the men awoke from their fitful sleep to almost clear skies. Potts then led the party to the Marias River where the U.S. Cavalry had an outpost to watch for whisky smugglers. It was early afternoon when they reached the bank of the Marias and saw the rough shacks of the cavalry outpost. Once again, Potts had come through right on the money.

As the policemen were being treated to a hot meal of buffalo steaks and steaming tea, they were dumbfounded to learn that Potts had been snow-blind during the last miles of their trek to Rocky Coulee. In spite of this he had led them to the exact spot he had intended. As far as the NWMP were concerned, Potts' capabilities would never again be questioned.

Although Potts was an invaluable scout and interpreter, he was by no means the perfect employee. His love of liquor got him into trouble on more than one occasion. Once he went with two constables to intercept two whisky traders who were reportedly smuggling a load of whisky from Fort Benton. The culprits were arrested, handcuffed and placed in the back of the wagon with their booze. Then, while the two policemen rode on ahead, Potts drove the wagon. Unfortunately, the trip was long and slow, and Potts was hot and thirsty. By the time the wagon reached Fort Macleod, Potts and the two smugglers had drunk all the evidence.

"On another occasion," according to historian Hugh Dempsey, "Potts had to be tied up until he slept off a particularly fiery drunk, and once he almost shot a member

of the force whom he mistook for an old enemy. One policeman observed that Potts had 'an unquenchable thirst which a camel might have envied. He drank whisky when he could get it. If he could not get it, he would take Jamaica ginger, or essence of lemon, or Perry Davis's Pain Killer, or even red ink'."

His virtues, however, far outweighed his vices. But he did have some flaws in his make-up. One was a superstitious nature inherited from his Indian mother. Another was lung trouble that bothered him throughout much of his life and, combined with his love for whisky, finally caused his death.

In the early 1890s, Potts was duck hunting with Const. Tom Clarke when a flock suddenly rose from a slough and flew over Potts' head. Clarke blasted away, and to his shock, Potts tumbled to the ground. Running over, Clarke found Potts sitting in the reeds, rubbing his head. Clarke checked Potts for wounds and found that he was alright except for a single lead pellet lodged just beneath the skin behind his ear.

Soon Potts was making his newly acquired keepsake a topic of conversation and never tired of telling the story of how he had come by it, especially when he was drinking. Potts considered the pellet a good luck charm, but the constant retelling of the story got to be a bore to the policemen at Fort Macleod. One night in 1896, after Potts had told the story yet again, a policeman asked for a look. The obliging Potts leaned over, but before he knew what was happening, the policeman had flipped open his jackknife and surgically removed the pellet. In the morning when Potts sobered up and realized what had happened, he bemoaned the loss of his good luck charm and voiced his concern for the future.

Over the next few months Potts lived quietly, even sullenly. He seemed to sense his time was near. One day early in July, Potts began haemorrhaging from the lungs. He was taken to Fort Macleod where the post surgeon did all he could for him. But the chronic cough that had nagged him for the last decade or so, and his long bouts with the bottle had finally caught up with the tough, inscrutable little scout.

Potts lingered for a few days and, on July 14, 1896, he died. His death was officially recorded as due to consumption but one of his sons, who was 20 years old at the time, said that it was cancer of the throat aggravated by prolonged years of drinking. The man whose life perplexed so many confounded all even with his death.

The NWMP mourned the passing of their loyal, courageous and resourceful scout and interpreter and buried him with full military honours. Three volleys were fired over his resting place; each volley followed by a general salute. Potts was laid to rest in a small Roman Catholic cemetery east of the town of Fort Macleod.

The Fort Macleod *Gazette* of July 17, 1896 eulogized his passing: "Jerry Potts is dead. Through the whole Northwest, in many parts of Canada, and in England itself, this announcement will excite sorrow, in many cases sympathy, and in all interest. His memory will long live green in the hearts of those who knew him best, and 'faithful and true' is the character he leaves behind him — the best monument to a valuable life."



WRITING-ON-STONE

One of a network of North West Mounted Police detachments along the United States border with Alberta, this outpost was established to curb whisky smuggling and discourage raiding among the Blood, Blackfoot and Gros Ventre Indians.

FROM a viewpoint on the Milk River Valley's northern rim, visitors have a birdseye view of the replica of the old North West Mounted Police (NWMP) outpost in the bottom lands. The post lies between the south bank and the twisting Milk River, 147 feet below the upland, brown-till prairies. Across the valley and south of the international boundary, "Medicine Line" to the Indians, looms the blue silhouette of the Sweetgrass Hills, which tower 2,500 feet above the surrounding plains.

The Sweetgrass Hills and the Medicine Line were the historic reasons for the police post's existence. Today the post lies within the 1,059-acre Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park, 20 miles east and five miles south of the little town of Milk River, Alberta. As well as the outpost, the park contains a goodly number of nature-sculpted "hoodoos," and many pictographs and petroglyphs of early Indian art — inscribed scenes of battle, some with guns and horses and some that pre-date the white man's weapons.

The valley and the Sweetgrass Hills are the result of interacting repercussions of plutonic activity in the bowels of the earth some 45,000,000 years ago. The impact that uplifted the Hills rifted the top layer of Milk River sandstone that overlays other sedimentary rock down to the precambrian basement. The ancient Milk River chasm served as a floodway for the meltwaters of the last ice age, some 12,000 years ago. The torrent deepened and broadened the drainage basin.



A general view of the Milk River Valley as it flows past the reconstructed NWMP outpost in Writing-On-Stone Provincial Park in Alberta. Police Coulee, in the top centre of the photograph, was a major route for Indian raiding parties and smugglers to and from the United States before the arrival of the NWMP.

Today the flood plains (terraces) and remnant oxbows indicate that the silty, meandering river has changed its course many times. In 1908 the spring floods raised the water 12 feet in two hours and washed away the NWMP blacksmith shops (there were two over the years). No evidence of them can be found by digging.

Before the white man came to the Milk River, Indians had long roamed the territory while hunting. They also crisscrossed the east-west, windswept valley to raid or make war on enemy tribes. The Blackfoot feared and revered the "holy" writings on stone they found on the free-standing cliff walls. Only those who wanted to see visions, or holy men, dared to visit these sites. Occasionally, war parties stopped for guidance. What they saw would tell them the success or failure of their projected ventures.

In September, 1874, the first column of NWMP to cross the prairies made camp in the Milk River valley. They were guided by a half-breed scout named Jerry Potts, whom they had hired at Fort Benton, Montana, on their jaunt south to get supplies. Potts led Asst. Comm. James Macleod to Fort Whoop-Up, the illicit whisky smuggling "capital" of the territory, located at the junction of the St. Mary and Belly (now Oldman) rivers.

Late in 1886, a raiding party of six Indians (five Blood and one Blackfoot), were returning from Montana with horses stolen from them by the Gros Ventres. As they made there way back to Canada they were pursued and, at Dead Horse Coulee, were ambushed and murdered. When the news reached the Blood Reserve the Indians were furious and threatened full-scale retaliatory war in the spring. The Blood Indian Agent, William Pocklington, an ex-policeman, informed the NWMP of the situation and the police moved quickly to try to head off the war they had been expecting for some time. The NWMP, however, were spread too thin and were stationed too far from the boundary line to be effective. Accordingly, during the last week of March, 1887, Supt. P.R. Neale instructed Supt. Sam Steele to reconnoitre the area with a view to establishing a string of outposts closer to the border.

With Jerry Potts as his guide, Steele went south across Kipp's Coulee to the Milk River Ridge, and from there, via Writing-on-Stone to Pendant d'Oreille Coulee. In his annual report for 1887, Steele wrote that both Kipp's Coulee and Pendant d'Oreille were "suitable for detachments, as they were situated in places where the river may be forded easily when the water is very high, and the banks being accessible are much used by travellers and law-breakers in crossing the boundary. Between these points there are sixteen very high and steep banks or soft spots, which make crossing very difficult."

On April 8, Steele instructed Inspector Wood of "D" Division, Lethbridge District, to station for patrol duty, two constables at Kipp's Coulee, and one sergeant and six constables each at Milk River Ridge, Writing-on-Stone and Pendant d'Oreille Coulee. During the time "D" Division remained in the district, they maintained "constant patrolling, night and day" between the detachments. In addition, wrote Steele, "The whole of the

detachments set out patrols to the southward during each day, and men with field glasses, situated on high hills, but concealed as much as possible, viewed the country in every direction."

According to Steele's report, "The outposts performed their duties in a most satisfactory manner. The few complaints made against them proved to be unfounded. No suspicious characters, smugglers, horse-thieves, or other criminals succeeded in crossing the boundary undiscovered; all Indians who attempted it were, with few exceptions, caught in the act, and compelled to give an account of themselves. The non-commissioned officer in charge of each outpost, sent in weekly a list and description of all whites and Indians passing and repassing, together with that of all horses, vehicles &c., in their presence."

Although the outposts were performing their duties with satisfaction, the four detachments were housed in tents, and Superintendent Neale, in his annual report for 1887, recommended that frame buildings and stables be erected at all four locations. He also recommended a fifth outpost be established at some point midway between Pendant d'Oreille and the western detachment of "A" Division.

On June 11, 1887, according to the 1887 annual report of Supt. A.A. MacDonell, "K" Division left Lethbridge to relieve the men of "A" Division on the frontier outposts. Kipp's Coulee then had two men and two horses, while Milk River Ridge, Writing-on-Stone and Pendant d'Oreille had eight men and eight horses each.

The outposts had originally been intended to deter raids between warring Indian tribes and prevent the smuggling of whisky and other contraband. However, it was not long before the NWMP were called upon to perform a task they clearly had not anticipated; arresting members of the force for desertion. On May 24, 1887, three constables deserted while out patrolling. Inspector Lakely, who had just arrived at the outposts, ordered Corporal O'Brien in pursuit. O'Brien soon picked up the deserters' trail and followed it to the Marias River in Montana. The fugitives had reached there a short time before him and had left the police horses, saddles and weapons in charge of the hotel-keeper. Corporal O'Brien then returned to Writing-on-Stone, apparently with the equipment, but without the deserters.

The annual reports are full of stories of desertions, not only from the boundary line outposts, but throughout the prairies. There were many reasons why men deserted. As far as the outposts were concerned, isolation caused many hardships on the men stationed there, while loneliness and tedious work lowered their moral. The attraction of gold mining in the Sweetgrass Hills, just south of the border, or good wages in railway construction, were also enticing men away. But superintendents Neale, Steele, Deane and others, in their annual reports, were certain they knew the major cause of desertion.

According to these officers and others, when a policeman enlisted with the NWMP, he was under the false impression that, if he chose to do so, he could obtain his discharge by purchasing his commission. However, while this was theoretically correct, only three

men were permitted to purchase their discharge each month. This resulted in a backlog of applicants, with some men being forced to wait up to a year or more. Since many of the men wanted to leave to take up more lucrative jobs, or take advantage of opportunities that might not be available for long, they were forced to become deserters.

In 1888, according to Supt. R.B. Deane's annual report, Messrs. Bruce & McFarquhor constructed "a frame building measuring 30x20x9 feet, with a lean-to kitchen," at Milk River Ridge at a cost of \$1,246. At the Pendant d'Oreille outpost, the area surrounding which literally "bristles with rattlesnakes," a "small log building, about 16x14x9 feet" was completed by the police themselves. In addition, there were about 30 good-sized logs ready for construction of a barracks. It also boasted a well-built corral, about 40 feet square.

Meanwhile, the Writing-on-Stone detachment was still under canvas. However, Deane reported that "some logs have been cut in a nearby coulee by the detachment during the summer, with a view to putting up buildings, but owing to epidemic among our horses the logs could not be got out." Deane added that a four-mile trail had been cut from the mouth of the coulee to the timber, "and an intervening creek has been bridged." As soon as horse power became available, the logs were "snaked" to the site selected for the building.

While the Writing-on-Stone police were preoccupied in cutting and hauling logs, an American fugitive tried to take advantage of the situation. Max Hoppe, who was wanted for murdering John Adams in the United States, was caught by Constable Elliot while trying to pilfer police supplies. Arrested, he was taken to Lethbridge and handed over to American authorities under warrant of extradition. The Lethbridge *News* sang the event; the Writing-on-Stone Mounties had got their man.

The original buildings of the Writing-on-Stone detachment were constructed in 1889. The post was strategically placed at the mouth of Police Coulee, a major route into Canada for raiding Indians, cattle rustlers and whisky smugglers. In his annual report for 1889, Superintendent Deane wrote: "A permanent camp has been built this year at Writing-on-Stone, and the Minister of Customs the other day said he had not seen many better log buildings even in Ontario. The house measures 24x18 feet with a lean-to kitchen, good cellar, shingle roof &c. The stable measures 30 ft. by 18 ft. shingle roofed, and capable of holding ten horses. A hay corral 55 ft. by 40 ft. has been constructed, and about 20 tons of hay put up. The camp is charmingly situated at the mouth of a coulee (Police) about five miles long on the south side of the river."

"The sides of the coulee are very precipitous and rocky. A fence at the mouth and another fence across the coulee about a mile up make an excellent corral for horses, where the shelter and feed are all that can be desired. The coulee abounds in wild currant bushes, the fruit of which is very fine. The logs used in the buildings &c., were cut about four miles up the coulee by three or four of our own men, who have been chopping and building ever since June. Hauling the logs down the coulee was

rough work and occupied a good deal of time. The road in the river bottom approaching the camp has been improved for about three miles, and made practicable for heavy teams. The ford has been graded and made good. A blacksmith shop has just been completed and the assistant farrier will remain all the winter, so will the veterinary assistant." During 1899, the Writing-on-Stone detachment consisted of one non-commissioned officer, six constables and eight horses.

As desertion continued to plague the frontier outposts, Deane reported that Milk River Ridge, Pendant d'Oreille and Writing-on-Stone each lost two men through this cause in 1889. Deane, voicing his displeasure with deserters, wrote: "As far as the police force is concerned, if men cannot be trusted near the frontier without taking advantage of its proximity, the sooner they benefit their country by leaving it the better."

Despite the desertions, hardships and loneliness, Writing-on-Stone became the headquarters for the valley outposts. This was due to its strategic location, and because the river could be forded at this point. Also, the outpost lay directly across from the Sweetgrass Hills mining camp where gold had been discovered in 1884.

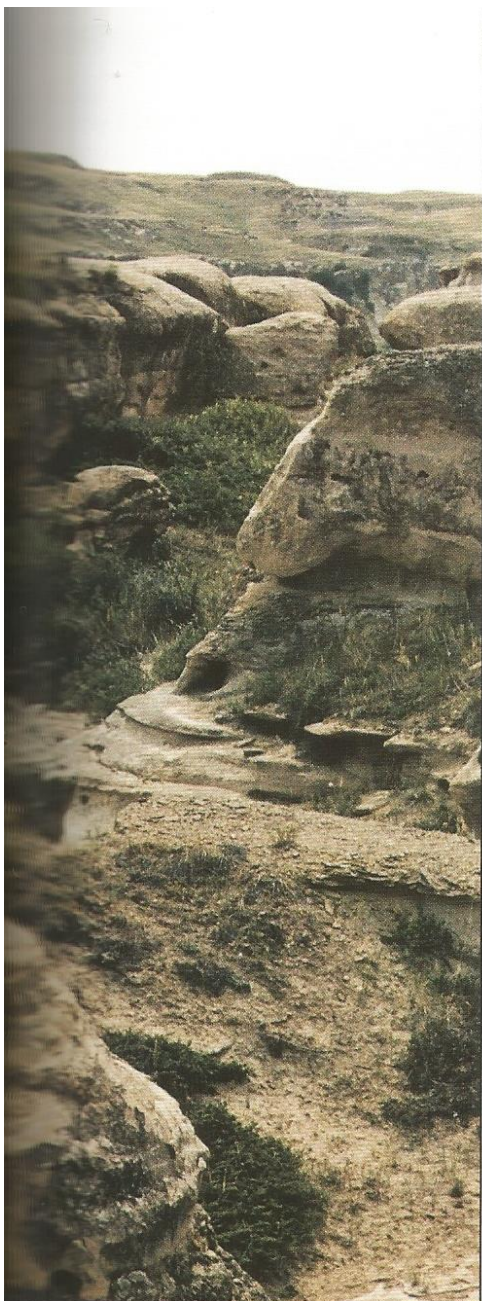
While the police at Writing-on-Stone continued their daily patrols of the boundary line, they also maintained contact with the detachments to the east and west of them. In this way the network of outposts that threaded from the Rockies to Manitoba held hands to prevent anyone from crossing without their knowledge. They examined the ground and the river fords for suspicious wheel tracks, footprints or hoofmarks. One horse at Writing-on-Stone, according to Superintendent Deane's annual report of 1895, set a record by travelling 3,933 miles; another covered 3,861 miles.

In addition to their regular duties, the police were often called upon to fight prairie fires and herd cattle. In fact, after their presence in the region had significantly curtailed whisky smuggling and Indian raids, quarantining American cattle and battling prairie fires became their major activities. Neither of these recognized the imaginary line nor the stone cairns placed every three miles by the Boundary Commission of 1874, which reached the Rocky Mountains in August of that year, only a month ahead of the NWMP.

In 1890, a dry year in the Sweetgrass Hills, both fire and cattle crossed over. The quarantine area, which lay between Milk River and the 49th parallel, a wedge that met on the border at Kennedy's Crossing, swarmed with livestock. This area was designated for imported cattle — never more than a few dozen at a time. To prevent cattle diseases from spreading into Canada, these animals would be put to pasture there for a period of 90 days. The Writing-on-Stone police were forced to become cowboys as they continually attempted to drive back the invading hordes to American soil.

Superintendent Deane, an understanding man, realized that cattle could not be prevented from slaking their thirst at the river. Where else could they drink? And how could a handful of men prevent them? For this practical purpose, he "bent" the boundary line from the 49th parallel up to Milk River. It then became the duty of the police



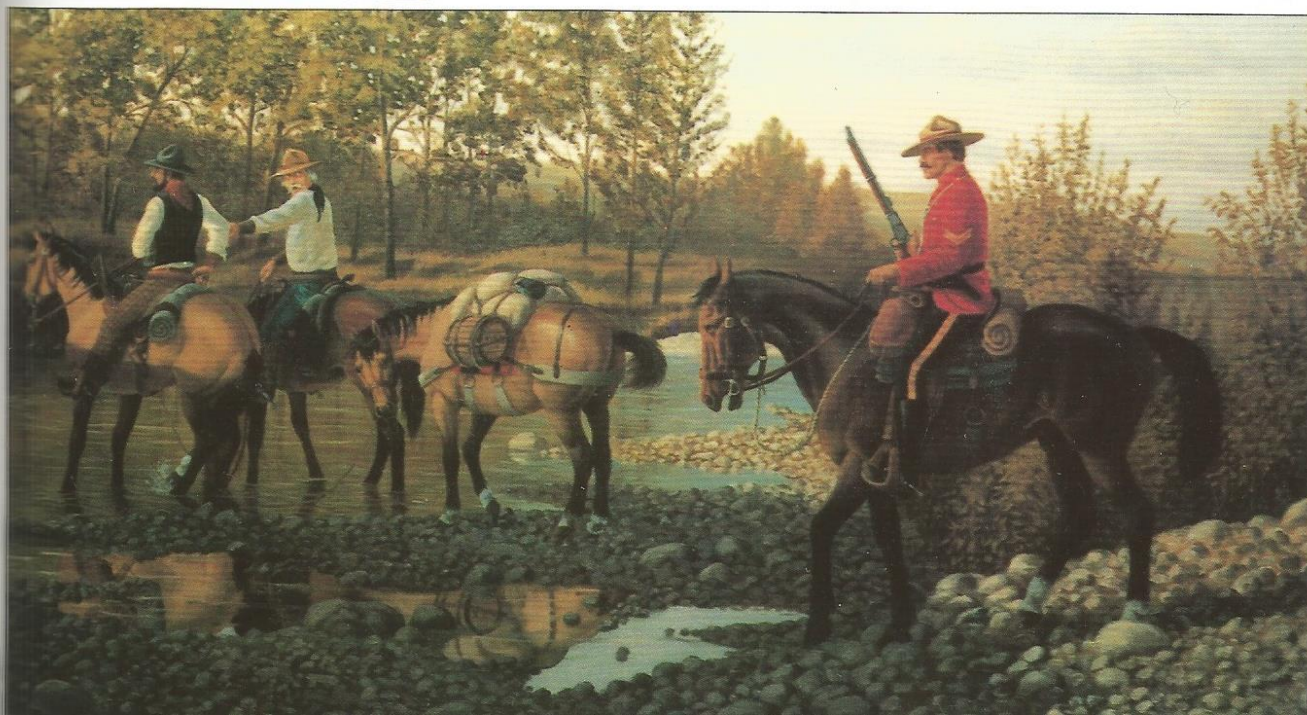


(Above) An unidentified Mountie poses with his horse and rifle at the Writing-On-Stone NWMP detachment.

(Left) The "hoodoos" in Writing-On-Stone Provincial Park. These formations were carved by wind and erosion over 10,000 years. The replica of the NWMP post is seen in centre background.

(Opposite page, bottom) Members of the Writing-On-Stone detachment pose before the NCO's and officer's quarters in 1915. Left to right: Sgt. J. Jurman; Spec. Const. R. Lipton; "Mack"; Cpl. Ted Langley and Const. L.J. Taylor.

(Below) This painting by Manitoba artist Terry McLean depicts a Mountie about to confront two apparent whisky smugglers. The frontier outpost had been established to curb smuggling and to prevent Indian raids.





(Above) Antelope hunters near the Writing-On-Stone police outpost in 1897. Note the sandstone cliffs and the sagebrush and skunk bushes growing in the rocks below. The crevices in the walls of the limestone must have provided plenty of hibernation space for the bull snake, prairie rattler and garter snake.

(Right) Hounds and wolfer near Writing-On-Stone in the 1890s. Judging by his boots, neat trousers and suspenders, this man could be a Mountie.

to keep the cattle from crossing the Milk River and to herd back those that did. Eventually, each of three American cattle outfits "lent" a cowboy to be stationed at the Milk River outposts — that is until authorities in Ottawa ruled that these men could not board or bed at police quarters.

In spite of all the problems, the Writing-on-Stone outpost succeeded in bringing security to the area. Settlers began to arrive in the late 1890s and the Writing-on-Stone detachment became a mail distribution point and social centre for the district.

Besides distributing mail and patrolling the border, the NWMP continued to drive cattle and to fight fires. In 1895 a fire that originated in the Sweetgrass Hills blackened 23,000 acres of Canadian rangelands. 1896 and 1903 also experienced big fires, some of which were started by sparks from wood-burning locomotives.

The local ranchers, largely composed of ex-police-men and eastern capitalists, came to depend of the NWMP to keep foreign cattle out of their haystacks and off their unfenced ranges, which were crown lands leased at one cent per acre per year, often in lots of 100,000 acres. They also expected to be protected from horse thieves, cattle rustlers and Indians who killed the odd beast in lieu of the vanished buffalo. The ranchers were not anxious to have the boundary line fenced, for their own cattle occasionally wandered south when driven by an Alberta blizzard. If they were stopped at the line, the herds would have no way of escaping death by freezing. But, in 1902, an American company began to erect fences



along the border.

The Customs Department also expected help from the police, as American stockmen using Canadian ranges were levied duty per head. Back in 1887, while Steele was selecting a site for the Pendant d'Oreille outpost, he saw a large number of cattle grazing at Pendant d'Oreille Coulee. After checking with Mr. Champness, the customs' officer at Lethbridge, it was ascertained that the cattle had been driven in from Montana and that no duty had been paid. They were seized, despite protests from the owner, a man named Spencer. Spencer had a small hut on Milk River, several miles east of Pendant d'Oreille Coulee, but on the north side of the international boundary. He told the police that he intended to apply for a lease, but Deane felt he was simply "endeavouring to graze his cattle where not likely to be observed." Sometime later, another patrol made a similar seizure from Spencer.

The police also got their whisky smugglers in this land of prohibition. Sometimes even a bored constable tried to smuggle a wee drop into the barracks. In 1899, Special Constable Tetu tried it, possibly in hopes of supplementing his meagre salary (50¢ a day for a beginning

constable; in 1910 this princely salary was raised to 60¢). What Tetu earned was a speedy discharge.

In Writing-on-Stone's history, 11 constables did not wait for any form of discharge. Taking their liquor problems with them, they deserted across the border. One of these deserters, J. Whittiger, has carved his name on Police Rock, so named for the 33 identifiable names inscribed in Police Coulee where the narrow passage leads down to the barracks below.

Because of the chronic boredom, it must have been an exciting day, sometime between 1889 and 1894, when the men of the lonely detachment got their only buffalo. At any rate, the archaeologists, who could find no trace of the blacksmith shop when they excavated in 1973-74, did find the bones of a bison carcass. It lay buried in what appears to have been a shed built previous to the 1894-1918 ice house, with its elk antlers over the double doors. Old-timers tell of festivities at the police quarters. Was this one of them? Did it end with a shindig?

At least Superintendent Deane wanted his men to eat well. As they were issued only mundane rations of meat, fat, pork, flour, dried apples and other minor staples, he allowed them to trade in their six-month meat ration for "luxury" items. (The ranchers allowed the red-coated "cowboys" to kill fresh meat — perhaps a thank you for services rendered.) When the Commissioner in Ottawa heard about such laxity, Superintendent Deane got a no thank-you from that source and was reduced in seniority.

Vernon Kemp, in *Without Fear, Favour or Affection*, tells wittily of characters in the force who adopted rules to fit the occasion. Corporal Dickson tangled with bugs — not the electronic kind, but those that fell from the ceiling of the barracks into his bed. It seems he never did get his "bug," but, singlehanded, he did capture three troublemakers who had been involved in the 1885 rebellion.

When word arrived from across the line that the men, who had sought asylum there, were on their way to Canada, after having threatened to kill anyone who interfered with them, Corporal Dickson resolved to bring them in. Upon reaching their camp at dawn he hid their horses. While two of the fugitives were out searching for their animals, Dickson captured and handcuffed the third, then fired several shots. The others responded to the signal, only to find themselves looking down the barrel of the policeman's pistol.

It was a commendable job, until someone with a tape measure discovered that the arrest had taken place some 2,000 feet over the border, on American soil. No law could adapt to this situation and no charge could be laid. The prisoners had to be released. However, the trio now had second thoughts about entering Canada, apparently having no taste for meeting a Mountie on his own ground, and returned to the American side.

Although the Writing-on-Stone police often encountered smugglers and other criminals, it was 1912 before they were involved in a murder case. It occurred when a fight between two of the Stokely brothers, who had separate homesteads but pastured their herds in common with a third brother, ended in the death of one and with Edwin Stokely being sentenced to hang.

Writing-on-Stone police, among their many duties, also served as "Man Friday" for the Customs Department. In 1915 Constable Eland rode into Montana to seize a smuggled bull belonging to a Canadian rancher named Bielsen. At the time of the trial the animal had conveniently wandered across the border. The constable had often retrieved strays, but this time the owner did not thank him — besides, the Mountie had forgotten to change his red coat for a cowboy shirt. Two Americans, a customs official at Grand Falls, Montana, and three of the Bielsens protested. As a result, Constable Eland's illegal act saw him removed from the boundary patrol.

According to author Les Hurt, white men were becoming as cunning at smuggling or rustling horses as the Indians had been earlier. Although Canadian customs official Hughes, stationed at Coutts, reported a suspected horse smuggling party consisting of a wagon, four riders and 150 horses to be heading north near Police Coulee, no telltale hoof marks at the river fords were found. Writing-on-Stone Cpl. Paddy White concluded, after a thorough search, that no such outfit had entered Canada. Today, one wonders, had Hughes seen visions, or had horse smugglers indeed become cunning?

Paddy White also served for the Department of Immigration during the hard winter of 1910-11. In his rounds of visiting destitute settlers with relief supplies, he was frozen so badly that some of his skin came off with his clothing. "I am pleased to say," notes an entry in the *RCMP Quarterly*, "that this constable was awarded \$25 out of the fine fund."

In 1914 White married Pearl Clark who, Myron Verburg of Milk River recalls, was the only woman ever to have lived in the Writing-on-Stone barracks. During the first year of World War I, Corporal White formed a squad of one at the outpost. No doubt his bride brought a touch of charm to the rustic barracks and added a change to the monotonous menu the men had formerly prepared from police rations. A pioneer woman would know how to garnish meat or game with luscious red buffalo berries that grew on the Milk River terrace.

In 1915 Corporal White bought his discharge from the NWMP to farm. Later he joined the Alberta Provincial Police, which had assumed the policing of the province.

In 1918 the Writing-on-Stone detachment was disbanded; settlement of the area had reduced the necessity for its presence. Canada also needed trained men to fight in World War I. For 30 years the Writing-on-Stone outpost detachment was successful in policing a huge expanse of prairie. The border patrol, of which it was part, had contended with smugglers, horse thieves and fugitives over the years. It had been a friend in turn to Indians, ranchers and homesteaders. By preceding settlement on the Canadian frontier, the law had prevented violence and bloodshed such as had been common across the border, where the opposite had occurred.

The early NWMP story lives again in the replica of its building and programs worked out since 1973 when the archaeologists moved in to begin their research. For visitors who view the relics, the stories of the past are retold in the broad, windswept, weird and wonderful Milk River Valley.

CANALS OF SOUTHERN ALBERTA

Just over a century ago, the parched plains of southern Alberta were undergoing a transformation. Irrigation canals were being dug at an unparalleled rate in one of the largest construction projects in the world at that time. But, as with all large undertakings, the canal project came with its share of speculators, schemers and dreamers.

THEY are often mistaken for the natural streams that seem to meander aimlessly through the gently contoured plains of southern Alberta. But the arteries that channel the fresh waters of the Rockies over the parched dry-lands of the south are not natural; they are the canals of southern Alberta. During the time of their construction, almost a century ago, the making of irrigation canals in Alberta was the largest such project ever undertaken on the North American continent. Yet, even for the many people that these canals serve today, popular knowledge of their origins is scant. To the high-way traveller, the existence of these canals often goes

unnoticed due to the natural camouflage of shrubs and trees that flourish along the banks.

The origins of the canal systems began with the laying of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) tracks through the territory known as Palliser's Triangle, during the early 1880s. As with most huge capital projects, the laying of railway tracks was preceded by years of studies and surveys. A British survey party led by Capt. James Palliser, an Imperial Army officer, and by Dr. James Hector, a Scottish physician and naturalist, took the "tourist's route" which followed the North Saskatchewan River to Edmonton. Upon reaching Edmonton, the group

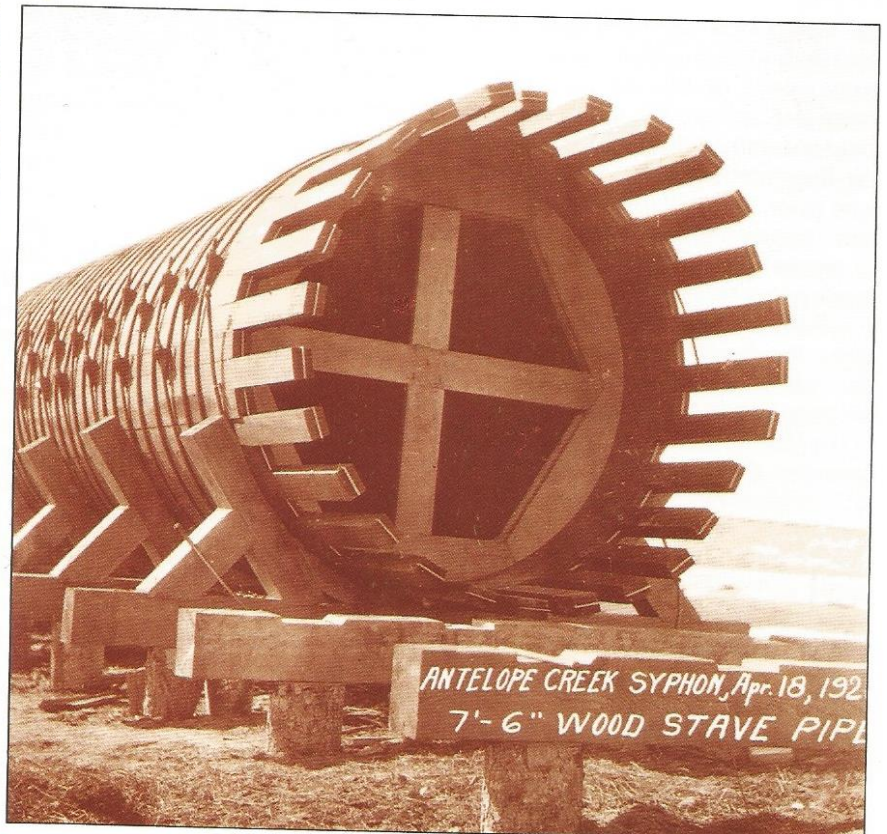
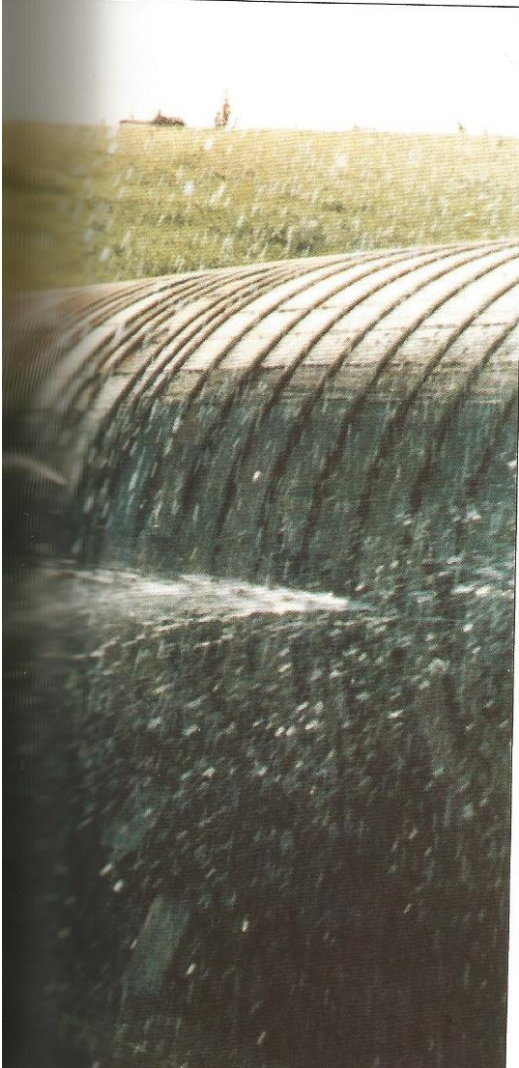




(Above) A canal near Monarch, Alberta.

(Left) These wooden syphons, located west of Nobleford, Alberta, were built in 1915.

(Below) The Antelope Creek syphon, in the Eastern Irrigation Section of southern Alberta, during construction in 1921.



decided to head due south. It was midsummer, 1859, when the survey party reached the southern portion of the North-West Territories, (as it was then known), an area which included Medicine Hat, Cypress Hills and Waterton Lakes.

A report on the Palliser-Hector expedition was published the following year, and characterized that area of the Territories very poorly. In Palliser's words, it was "arid, infertile and totally unsuited for settlement, as it is an extension of the Great American Desert." The summer of 1859 must have been a hot one indeed! It was in this unfortunate context that the southern lands of Alberta and Saskatchewan became known as Palliser's Triangle.

Rather unexpectedly the CPR chose not to lay their main track through the "tourist route" via Edmonton, as had been originally planned. Instead, the CPR decided to put the railroad through the south right through Palliser's Triangle.

When the railroad reached Medicine Hat in June 1883, it brought with it a steady influx of new settlers to the area. The advent of mass immigration and regional development attracted a high degree of British investment to the Territories. Many large farms and ranches were assembled; and southern Alberta even saw the establishment of steamboat shipping firms. These grandiose schemes were undertaken at great expense by wealthy, British absentee investors. Undoubtedly they had been over-optimistically informed of opportunities in the area. Many ventures quickly failed, and the anticipated quick profits sought in the frontier development simply never materialized.

Initial attempts at irrigation were made by innovative farmers who sought water for their own land. The earliest means of irrigation was to ditch a stream onto the land and flood it. Unfortunately, many hundreds of acres were ruined by this method, which resulted in alkalis being leached into soil which had been flooded unevenly. Only naturally gently sloped land could be irrigated by the flood method and it was often necessary to level the land prior to flooding. Many farmers who attempted the flood method simply did not have capital or equipment to properly level their land, and quickly found that too much water created as many problems as too little.

Serious irrigation efforts began in the early 1890s when the North-West Territories endured a prolonged drought which lasted several years in most areas. Mormon farmers, who had expertise in irrigation projects in the United States, were hired to build some of the first recorded ditches around Calgary — a few of which are still visible today.

At the forefront of irrigation development were two men, William Pearce and Peter T. Bone. As early proponents of irrigation they are credited with convincing sceptical farmers, leery financial backers and reluctant politicians to embrace the long term benefits that they believed irrigation would bring. Pearce was an acknowledged expert in the field of irrigation, and began his career with the Dominion government as a surveyor. He was among the first group of surveyors sent west to Manitoba after it was admitted to Confederation in 1870. Later he became a director of the Dominion Land Board

which administered freehold lands to the surge of settlers coming West.

Despite his renowned expertise about resources and the possibilities of the Great West, Pearce frequently suffered setbacks in advancing his progressive ideas, which were not always well understood. Like many great men, his thoughts and plans were often far ahead of his contemporaries. And, like other men of vision who were ahead of their time, he was often branded a dreamer.

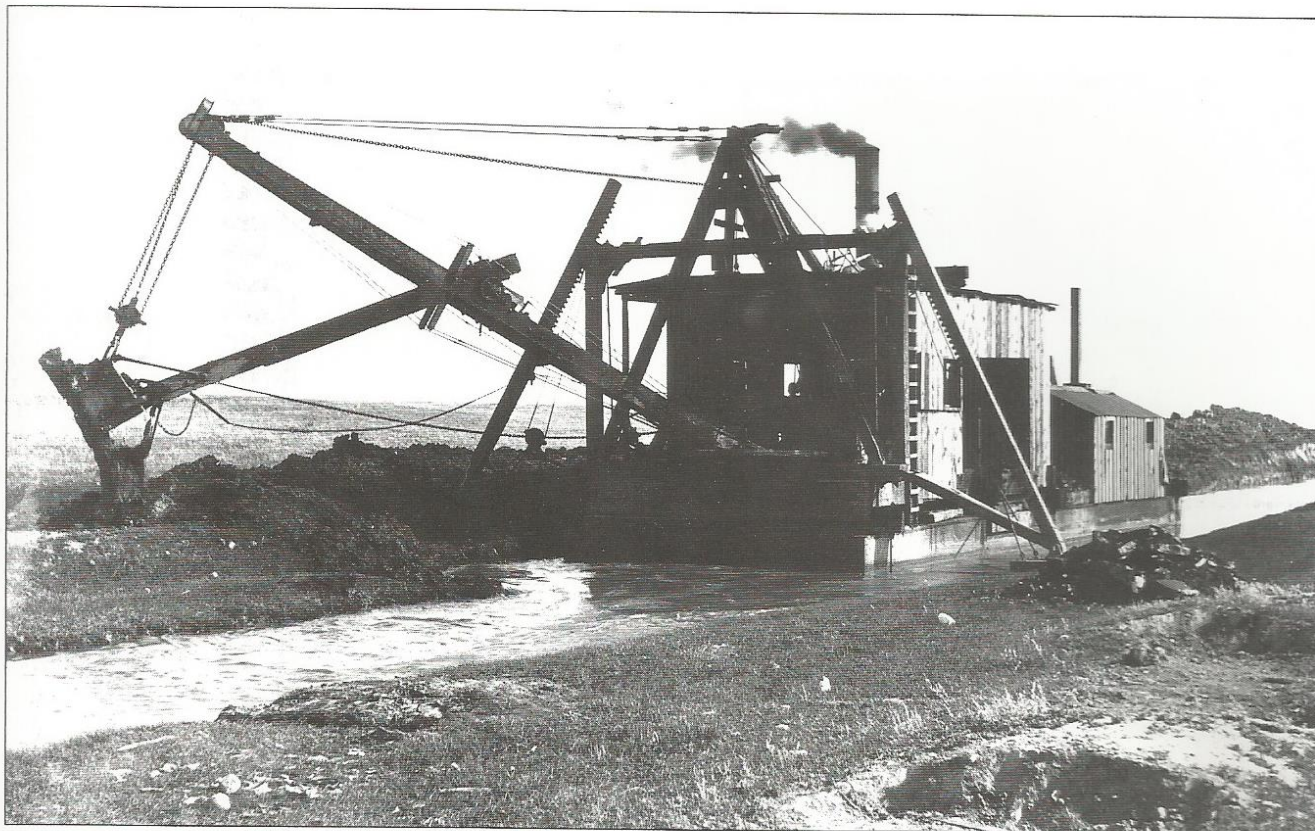
Later in his career, Pearce joined the CPR when it began developing irrigation schemes within its chartered lands. However it was during his retirement that Pearce put forward his most ambitious scheme, a massive irrigation plan that would open up approximately 7,500 square miles of potential agricultural land in southern Alberta and Saskatchewan. Pearce proposed this project in a 1916 report commissioned by Sir John Lougheed. However Pearce's plans were shelved without further action, and he died years later in 1930, at age 82, without seeing sod turned on his greatest dream. The timing of his death was prophetic, as many irrigation schemes faltered and collapsed during the ruinous conditions of the Dirty Thirties.

Peter Bone was a Scottish immigrant who had been employed on railway projects in Ontario, Quebec and Maine. He was later employed as an engineer on CPR construction projects in Western Canada, where he met Pearce. Bone also wrote a fascinating account of the CPR's activities in western Canada entitled *When the Steel Went Through*.

Through partnership, Pearce and Bone formed the Calgary Irrigation Company which, utilizing Pirmez Creek, north of Calgary, began operations in 1892. Adjacent lands were irrigated by the flood method. With favourable rains returning in the spring of 1896, however, many farmers no longer found it necessary to consider irrigation. These wet years spelled disaster for the company; heavy rains damaged the floodgates and main ditches, and with the return of the rains, the company was left with no market for its water and was forced to cease operations. The short life of the first commercial irrigation enterprise was destined to be repeated by other operators who attempted to harness the smooth flowing, but financially turbulent, irrigation waters.

Many commercial irrigation companies, financed largely by private British investors, were formed during the early stages of irrigation development. Inherent in the establishment of irrigation firms was the lure of highly profitable investments. The marketing strategy was simple. The dry-lands of southern Alberta could be purchased in large tracts at a very low price. With the addition of an irrigation system, the lands could be subdivided into smaller farms and sold at a profit. Today, none of the companies mentioned below operate as private enterprises, as most irrigation districts are user controlled.

The first permanent, large scale irrigation scheme in Canada was undertaken by the Alberta Irrigation Company. Established in 1898, its operations were centred near Lethbridge and the surrounding communities of Magrath, Raymond, Coaldale and Taber. It later



A dredge excavating an irrigation canal near Lethbridge in the 1890s.

became known as the Canadian Northwest Irrigation Co. and still later as the Alberta Railway and Irrigation Company (AR&I). The AR&I was taken over by the CPR in 1912, with the understanding that the CPR would undertake expansion and upgrading of canals utilized for irrigation purposes.

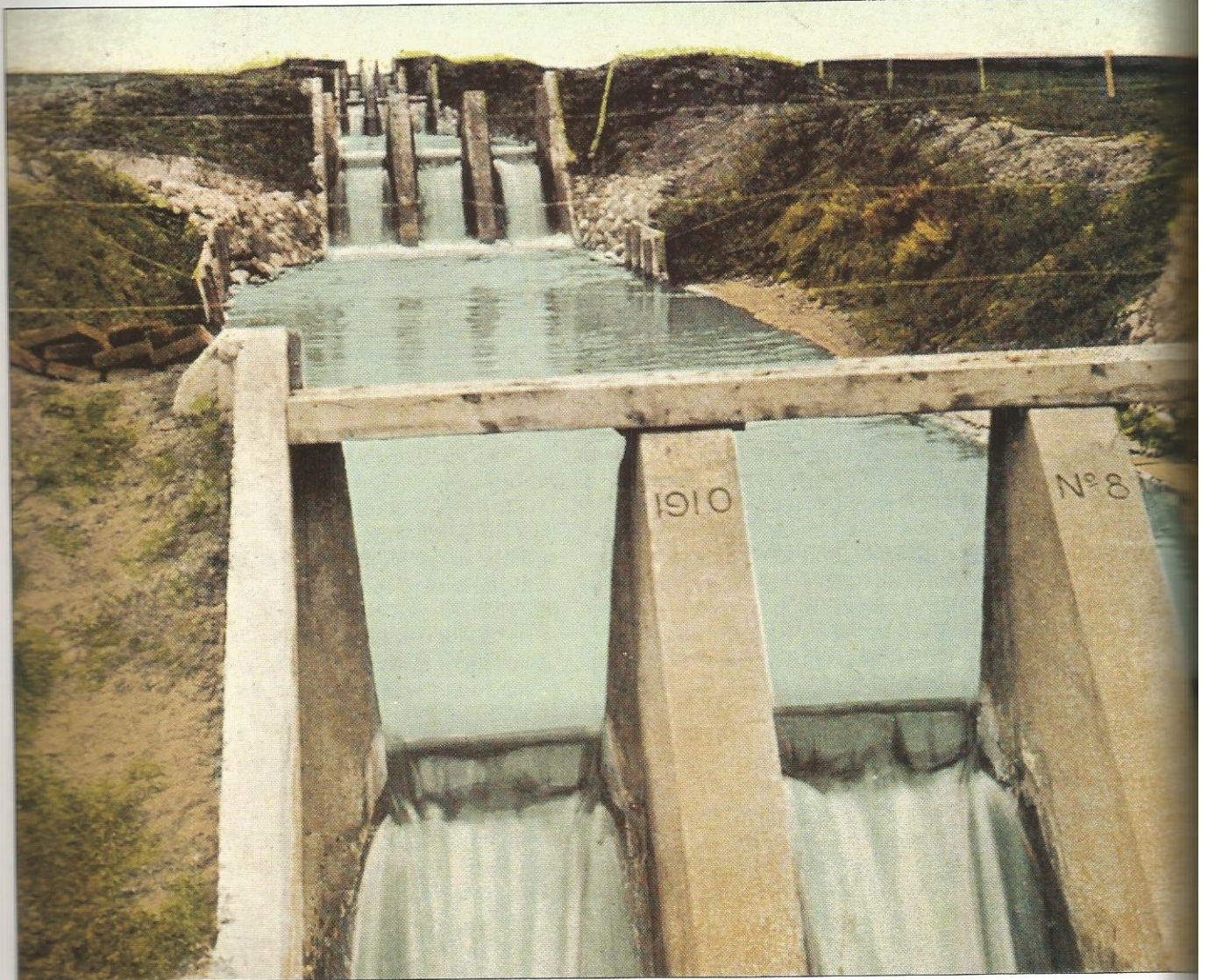
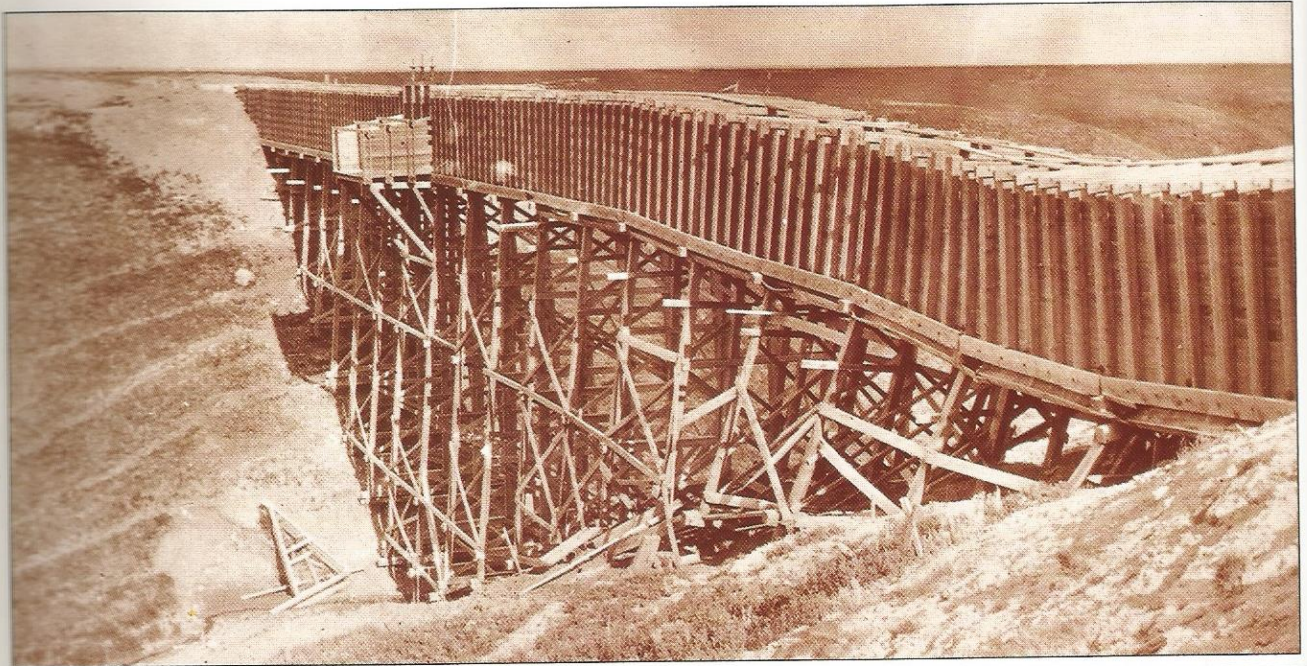
The Alberta Land Company (ALC) was formed in 1909 by F.D. Aylwin of Ottawa. Aylwin's lands were located in the Arrowhead district of southeastern Alberta. Since its inception, the ALC had been involved in several ingenious engineering schemes to develop its lands. Many of the projects were developed under the direction of James McGregor, the firm's general manager. One such project which attracted wide publicity, featured the use of two huge wooden, inverted siphons. The siphons were about seven feet in diameter, and were used as holding tanks. Because of the steep grade of a valley situated on the project site, the water was siphoned into an overhead wooden flume supported on a trestle constructed across the valley. One siphon carried water across the Bow River valley, near Tilley. Although the ALC was forced into receivership after its main canal was washed out in the spring of 1914, its assets were later amalgamated into the Canada Land and Irrigation Company operations.

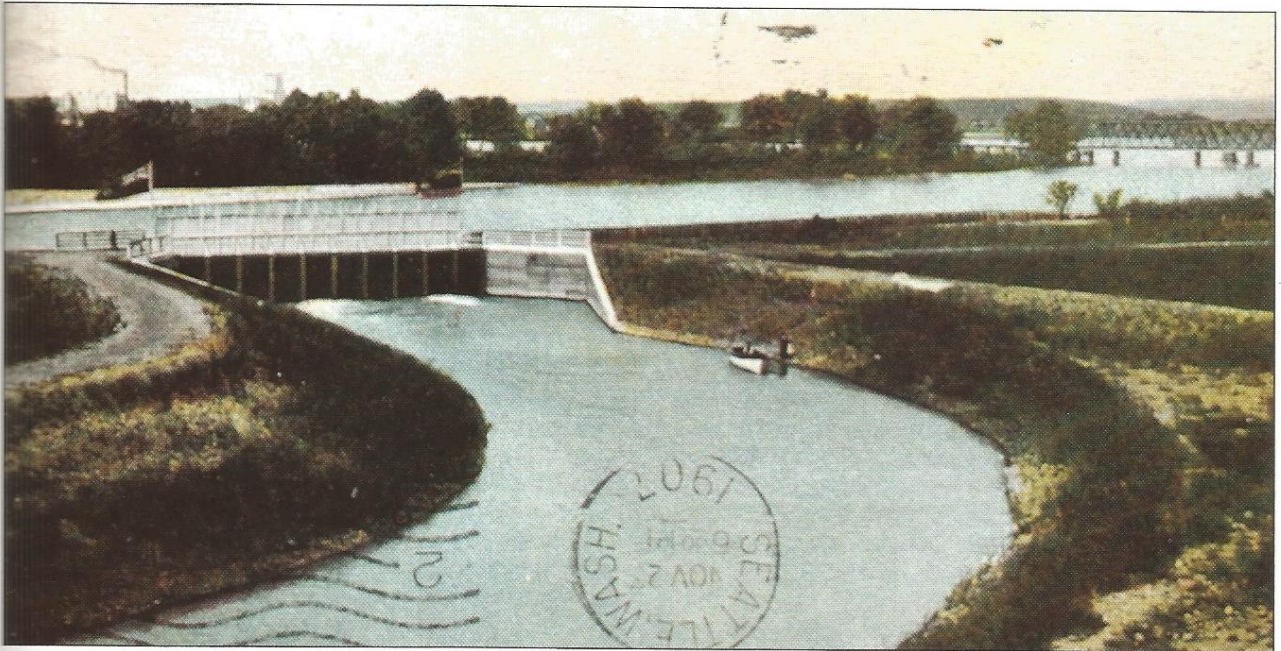
The Canada Wheat Lands Company (CWLC) was one of the first to undertake large scale dry-land farming (lands farmed without irrigation). Although the yields were considerably lower, dry-land farming could be feasible if practiced on a large scale. The company acquired lands near Suffield, and the first crop years of 1912 and 1913, with yields averaging about 13 bushels per acre,

were moderately successful. The following year the crops were unharvested due to drought. Worse, additional capital could not be obtained due to the outbreak of the First World War. These events forced the company to place its acreage up for sale to local buyers from the Medicine Hat area. The company had poured many thousands of dollars into the town of Suffield, constructing company houses, stores and hotels. The most notable hotel, known as the Alamo, sported a 40-foot bar and was said to be the finest watering hole between Calgary and Regina.

The Southern Alberta Land Company (SALC) was formed and financed by a British firm, Robins Irrigation Co., in 1906. It acquired lands northeast of Lethbridge, near the confluence of the Bow, Belly and Oldman rivers with the intention to resell the land 10 years after irrigation canals were constructed. Unfortunately, the firm suffered a major setback when its main canal gate collapsed at Namaka in 1912. This was the first of many disastrous occurrences to beset the new company. Cost overruns began to accumulate and engineering deficiencies surfaced. Adding to its misfortunes, one of the main dams was washed out during the spring floods of 1914. The SALC faced further financial difficulties when its major British shareholder declared bankruptcy, and attempts to bring new capital into the firm were unsuccessful.

In 1917, the SALC merged with two other faltering companies, the CWLC and the ALC. These three firms decided to consolidate operations due to individual difficulties such as a series of construction delays, disappointing land sales and lack of new capital injection as a result of the war. These setbacks set the stage for a



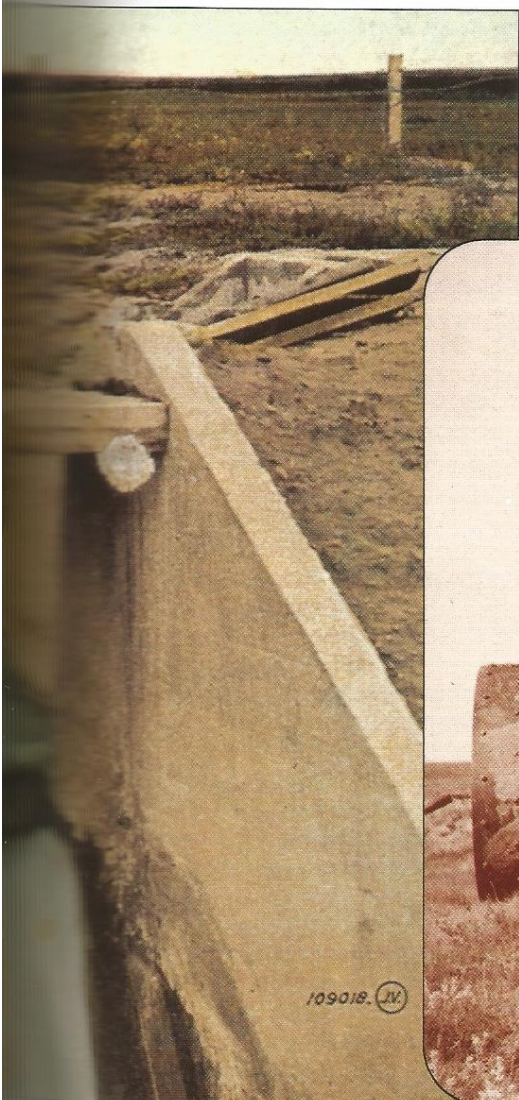


(Above) A coloured postcard, dated 1907, that shows the Bow River and irrigation canal at Calgary.

(Opposite page, top) Collapsing of flume on Bow River between Arrowhead and Gleichen, Alberta, in 1909.

(Left) A coloured postcard showing steps on irrigation canal, Gleichen, Alberta.

(Below) A Ruth dredger near Brooks, Alberta, in 1919. This dredge, which straddled approximately 18 feet when in operation, was used to clean up and enlarge irrigation ditches.



newly created firm, to be called the Canada Land & Irrigation Company (CL&IC).

With the consolidation of the three firms, the CL&IC brought together a tract of land of about 470,000 acres. Debenture stock was issued to offset existing debts. Lands sales began shortly after the war ended in 1918, and water deliveries commenced a few years later, after the construction of the two main reservoirs, Lake McGregor and Little Bow were completed. Financial difficulties once again arose in the early 1920s as the effects of the postwar depression dragged on. Grain prices dropped and farmers fell behind in paying their water delivery fees. Paralleling the decline of grain prices were land sales which contributed to the company's misfortune.

In 1924, the CL&IC was placed in receivership and remained inactive for the following three years. During those years, government assistance was necessary to maintain the canals and provided farmers with a standby water supply.

The CL&IC relinquished its lands to the east of the Bow River to the federal government, to whom it owed its majority debts. The new agreement reduced the CL&IC's acreage to about one third of its original land holdings, but the debt-free restructured company was now in a promising position to make good on its ultimate objective — a positive return of investment. However this was not to be; the Great Depression of the 1930s set in and brought with it the harsh realities that Mother Nature can inflict.

During the Second World War a series of agreements were drawn up between the CL&IC and the provincial government in order to restructure the payment of back taxes. None of these agreements proved to be satisfactory and the company by then had become almost entirely dependent on the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Association for funds. In 1950 the CL&IC ceased operations, after which most of its land holdings were absorbed by the above noted Association.

By far the most intensive and largest irrigation scheme undertaken in southern Alberta was that of the CPR. By its incorporation charter, the CPR was to be granted 25,000,000 acres of land located on alternate sections in a strip extending 24 miles on either side of the mainline right-of-way. The CPR, however, was under no obligation to choose lands that were "unfit for cultivation," to quote the terms of its original charter. Thus, the CPR declined to accept lands located in the Palliser Triangle, and opted for more choice lands to the north in the Battleford region of Saskatchewan.

Under pressure from the waves of new settlers coming west, the federal government ordered the CPR to select the remaining 3,000,000 acres outstanding under its incorporation terms. This edict was issued in 1903, some 18 years after the famous last spike was driven into the firm's main line. A plan put forward by James S. Dennis, the Inspector of Surveys for the Dominion government, and by William Pearce, Superintendent for the Dominion government, advised the CPR that large tracts of land could be made fertile with the construction of irrigation canals. Subsequently, the CPR decided to accept

its remaining land in the Calgary-Medicine Hat corridor and established an irrigation scheme, later to be known as the Irrigation Block. The Block was subdivided into three sections, known as the Western, Central and Eastern sections. In 1903 work to develop the Irrigation Block began.

Due to its proximity to Calgary, and because it offered a more attractive commercial return, the development of the Western District was undertaken first. Construction lasted seven years, during which some 1,600 miles of canals were excavated, irrigating about 219,000 acres of the million acres contained in the tract. The main engineering project undertaken in the Western section was a concrete intake to the main canal and were located on the Bow River in east Calgary. Today, Strathmore is the operational headquarters for the Western Irrigation District, forerunner of the CPR's Western Irrigation Section.

The Central Section was never developed after surveys showed the area to be too hilly and infertile to warrant construction of a feasible canal system.

Construction of the Eastern Section, which began in 1910 and lasted five years, was somewhat more extensive than the canal system in the Western block. Some 2,500 miles of canals were built, which opened up approximately 400,000 acres (about one third of the tract size). The major dams which control the waters in the Eastern Section are situated at Bassano, where the head gates of the main canal are located, and Brooks, where a main aqueduct is located.

As irrigation projects developed, the CPR created experimental farms in the Western and Eastern sections to advise farmers of the best methods to utilize water for their crops and livestock. It was all part of the marketing plan in which the CPR, like the other companies, hoped that land sales and water rights would help pay for the immense and costly irrigation schemes. Today, the CPR is not involved with irrigation, as both the Western and Eastern Irrigation Districts are managed autonomously of the company.

Construction of the extensive irrigation works was primarily done by men and horses. Simple earth moving attachments going by the names of "fresnos" or "slips" and scrapers were basically shovels of various sizes, pulled by horses and driven by operators. A slip type shovel could move about one cubic yard, whereas a scraper could move a slightly larger volume of earth. Land to be irrigated was levelled by an attachment known as a "drag." Pulled behind a team of horses, the drag was the forerunner of today's grader. Later, construction techniques became more mechanized with the use of excavators, dredges and huge Marshall tractors, which began to make their appearance on the prairies after the First World War."

Because of the scale of construction required for irrigation, men had to be brought in from surrounding areas, such as Doukhobor workers from Saskatchewan. The men were housed in work camps, some containing as many as 200 operators, with an equal number of horses. The construction of the canals brought needed employment to the districts, and supplied seasonal jobs for

many who lived off the lands. Labourers working for the CPR were paid about \$2.00 per day in 1909. Subcontractors, who owned their own equipment, were paid based upon the volume and distance of earth moved.

Heavy wooden timbers were used to construct the canal gates and spillways. Gradually, these timber installations were replaced with longer lasting concrete structures which required less maintenance. Once the canal system was in place, seasonal work crews were employed to maintain them.

Canal construction stimulated growth for supply centres providing lumber, wire and food. Most notable among firms supplying food to the CPR crews was the Burns Food Co., headed by entrepreneur Pat Burns. As well, thousands of tons of hay and oats were consumed by the horses used in the construction process. Many local farmers and ranchers were grateful to find a market for their produce.

Once an irrigation district had been established, it was divided into ditchrider areas. Areas extended as far as a horseback rider could patrol during the course of a day. The people who patrolled the canals did so on horseback or in small democrat wagons. Each ditchrider patrolled his section and was responsible for the preparation of maintenance reports on canal conditions. This position reported to the Water Master, who undertook allocation of water volumes through the various canals. Many ditchriders also had the luxury of company supplied houses. Telephone services were installed in some districts in the 1920s to aid Water Masters, ditchriders and farmers alike, in regulating and conserving water demand throughout the irrigation system.

During the late 1920s, weather patterns changed in southern Alberta. The summers became drier and were subject to sudden shifting winds, while the snowfall during the winters were abnormally low. Beginning in 1927, a series of small dust storms were recorded which ominously foreshadowed the ruinous decade of the Great Depression, or what some called the "Dirty Thirties." Farmlands dried up severely, during the early 1930s as massive dust clouds hovered over the windswept prairies. Canals were choked off and plugged with soil; reservoirs vanished. Farmlands became wastelands. Tragically, many farm families were forced off their land, some near starvation. They had no alternative but to abandon their land and try a new vocation, or take up farming elsewhere. Undoubtedly, many of these people would have agreed with Palliser's earlier assessment of the area.

Alarmed at the severe devastation the drought had brought to the prairie provinces, the Canadian government passed the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act in 1935. Its purpose was to increase water supplies to the parched districts. The St. Mary's River Dam was built to partially accommodate this objective. However, the outbreak of the Second World War intervened, and little money was available to upgrade the swiftly deteriorating canals.

The onslaught of the Depression, the disastrous dry spells, and war brought ruin to irrigation owners and users alike. Maintenance and reconstruction work

stopped as most farmers were unable to make water fee payments. The CPR was forced to close many portions of the canals in its Western Section. Many ditches had sloughed in, and control gates were in disrepair. Individual farmers were requested to sign off their rights and many did. However, some farmers in the Strathmore area rejected this idea, and began a movement to retain the water system. This movement eventually led the provincial government into passing the Western Irrigation Act which made it autonomous from CPR administration.

During the early stages, many irrigation schemes fell victim to the speculative aims of company men who were more interested in obtaining funds from the company treasury, than in developing a feasible irrigation system. The result was debt-ridden companies trying to sell their irrigated lands at unrealistic prices. Coupled with this was the farmer's reluctance to change and embrace the concept of irrigation. Many felt irrigation would be too costly to accrue any practical benefits.

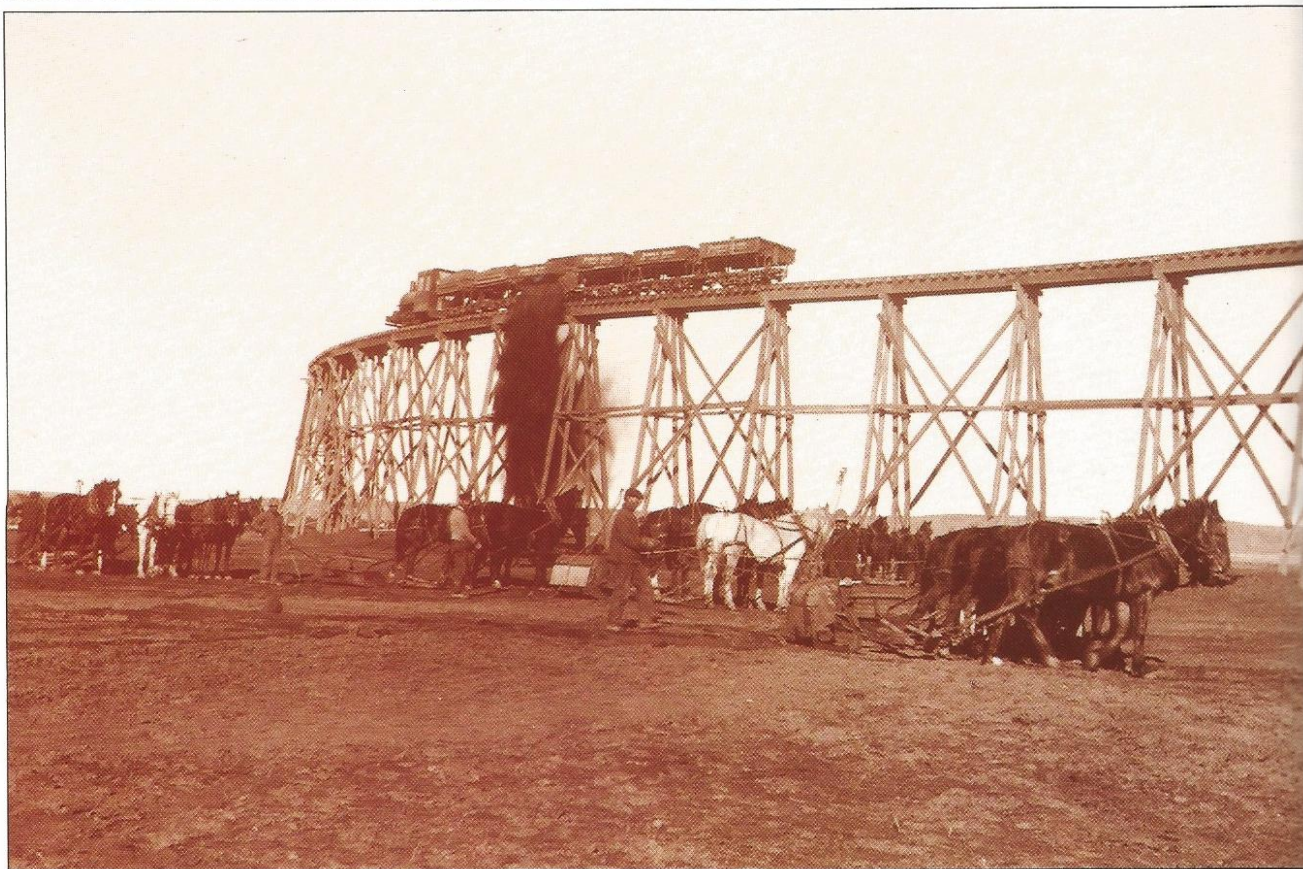
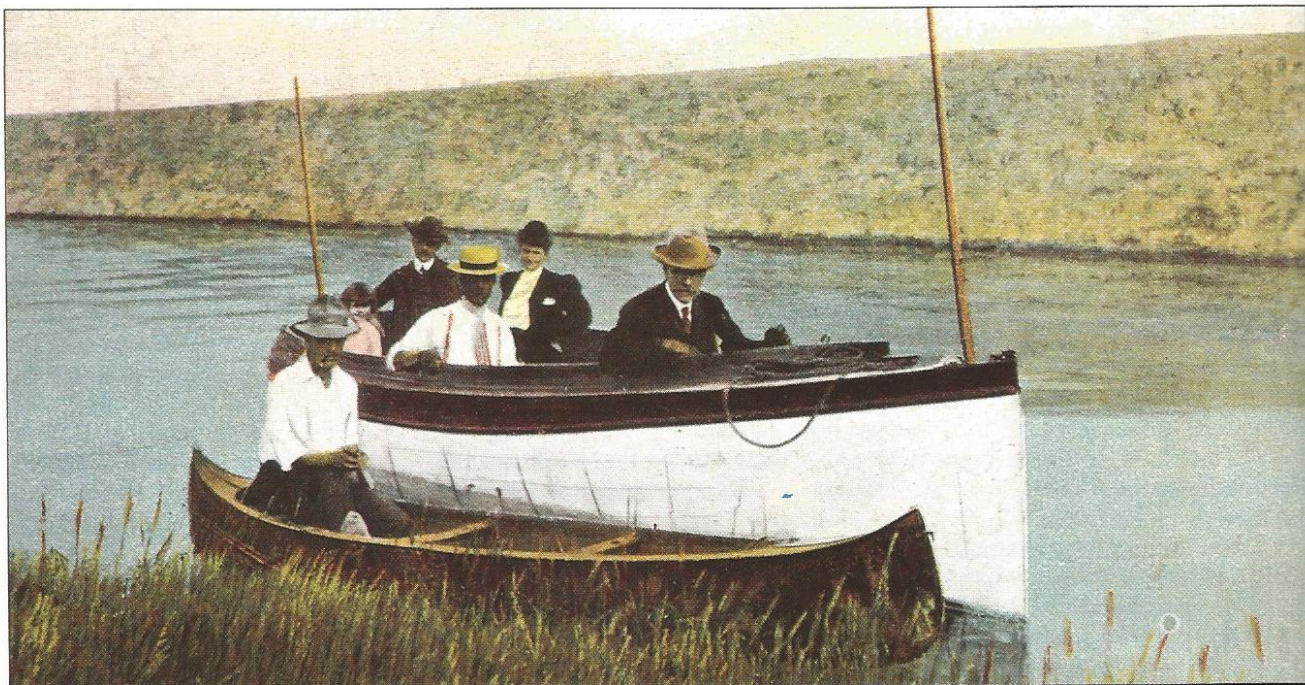
However these setbacks were minor in a larger sense, when one considers that the irrigation projects survived two world wars, and the disastrous Dirty Thirties; three world events that changed the lives of generations. In light of these adversities, private firms increasingly sought government relief for the operation and continuation of their role in irrigation. Through the post war years, until the 1960s many irrigation systems fell into disrepair. Self-seeded trees clogged many canals, resulting in lost water capacity. With the advent of new irrigation technology, such as the rolling well method and the central pivot mechanism, the limited water resources of the south have been greatly improved. More government funding has primed irrigation systems, relieving temporary demands brought about by agricultural expansion.

Today, "backhoes" dredge the system with versatility and ease, keeping the canals sludge free, while the pickup truck has replaced the horse and democrat wagons. Automatic metering devices keep track of water flows and regulate fluctuating demands.

It is difficult to imagine the scale of construction which took place during the turn of the century and continued at a rapid pace, until the mid 1920s. It was said to be the largest construction undertaking on the North American continent at the time. By today's standards, the construction of an irrigation channel looks relatively easy, but by the standards of man, horse and plough days of a bygone era, it was a formidable feat.

The irrigation districts are now managed much differently than was originally planned. Most, if not all, irrigation districts operate as a cooperative, and government funds play a heavy role in capitalizing and maintaining the systems. Operational policies are chiefly guided by the farmers they serve. This is in sharp contrast to the original speculative aims of early irrigation franchisers. In addition, many of the ditchriders and maintenance crews are now unionized, and the possibility of irrigation system shutdowns arises due to labour grievances.

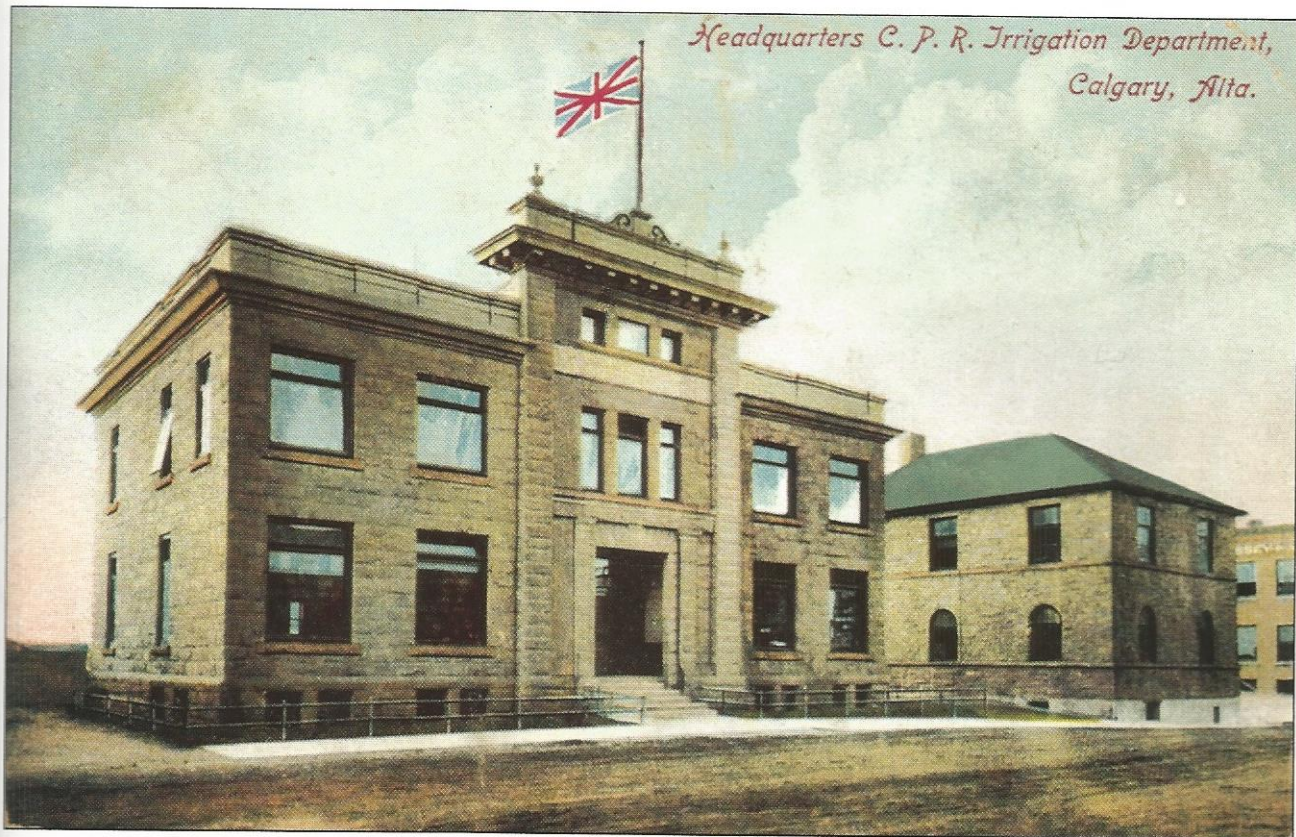
More dramatic changes may be in store for irrigation users and others, indirectly. Water transfers from



Alberta's northern rivers to the dry south have already been proposed to ease demand. Changing weather patterns have been predicted by many leading American meteorologists — patterns that indicate above normal temperatures for North America. Several schemes have also been put forward, proposing the use of sewage to fertilize the dry lands of east-central Alberta. Effluent from the cities could be transported by pipeline to users.

Like the early surveys undertaken by Palliser and Hector, many of the above noted plans are in their preliminary stages, but it is likely that the development and expansion of irrigation schemes will play a major role in Alberta's future.

It would be to the delight of the early proponents of irrigation, men who were often scoffed at as dreamers — men such as Pearce, Bone and Dennis — that delegations



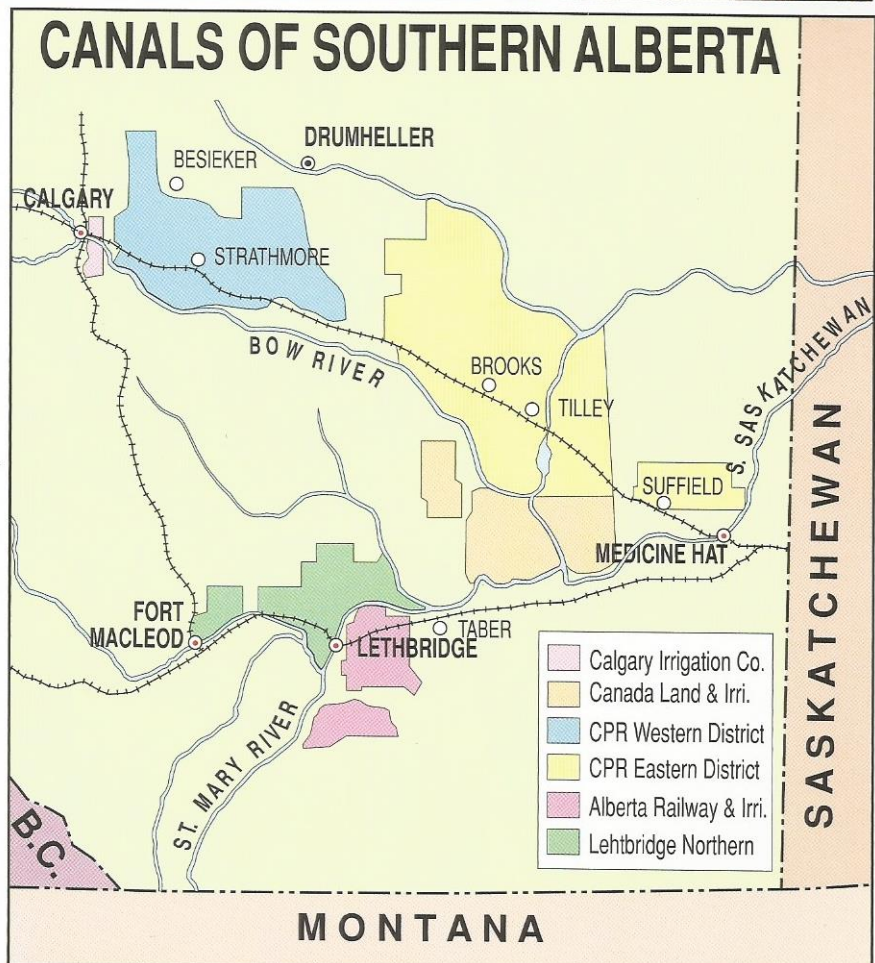
(Above) A coloured postcard showing the CPR Irrigation Department headquarters, Calgary, Alberta, c1907.

(Opposite page, top) A coloured postcard of people boating on a CPR irrigation canal, c1907.

(Opposite page, bottom) Trains dumping earth at Bassano Dam construction site on the Bow River, Alberta, in 1910. Men with teams of horses are spreading the earth.

from countries such as Egypt, Pakistan and India, come to southern Alberta to view the smoothly running irrigation waters. It is men such as these, who have given Canada international recognition, as having one of the most advanced irrigation schemes in the world.

In many ways, irrigation developments at the turn of century characterized the indomitable spirit of westerners. Westerners, who were immigrants and easterners, who had left their homes and relatives, to forge a new life in an unknown and untried land. They proved that Capt. John Palliser was dead wrong. And the time may be near again for the irrigation canals of southern Alberta to regain the prominent threshold they had at the turn of the century. ❀



DISASTER AT FRANK

Telegraph keys clacked, but the messages were garbled. Something terrible had happened at the coal mining town of Frank in the Alberta section of the Crowsnest Pass, but exactly what happened was not very clear.

IN the pre-dawn darkness of April 29, 1903, a stupendous roar broke the silence high up the face of Turtle Mountain above the little coal mining town of Frank, Alberta. One hundred seconds later, an estimated 70,000,000 tons of limestone had slipped off the mountain and cascaded into the Crowsnest Valley below. The rock, sweeping down the mountain, compressed the air before it into an invisible solid wall, snapping off trees and splintering houses before the rock itself arrived.

In those horrifying seconds, men, women and children, asleep in those houses and tents, were hurled hundreds of yards by the nightmarish onslaught of air and rock. Those who happened to be awake could not know

exactly what was happening as the night became a deafening roar of wind and crashing chunks of limestone.

The Prospector, a weekly newspaper published in nearby Fort Steele, British Columbia, did not report on the disaster until May 2, even though it had received news of the calamity the same day it occurred. However, those first reports, commented the newspaper, "were wild, vague and contradictory."

"The first report was that a volcanic eruption had occurred and that the town had been buried by an avalanche of eruptive rock and ashes. Then came a second report that the disaster was due to an explosion of gas in the mine, and that the whole face of Turtle moun-

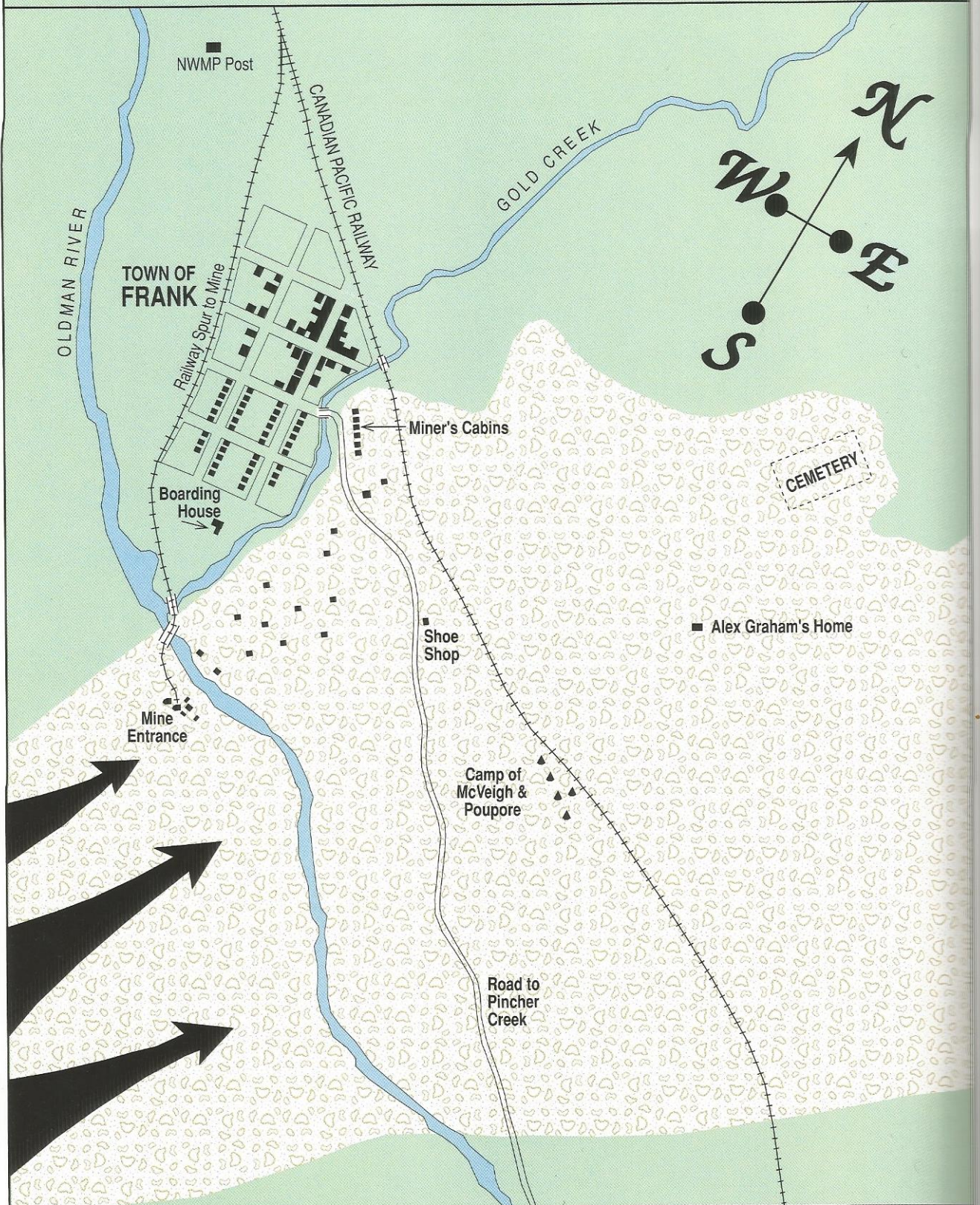
This grim scene shows the damage to a row of miner's houses the morning after the disastrous Frank slide. Only the ruptured roof of the Alexander Leitch home shows to the left.

(Inset) Rescued miners being taken to town by wagon. Turtle Mountain is in the background.





THE FRANK SLIDE



tain, overlooking the town had been blown out, and the greater part of the town with all its inhabitants buried beneath the debris."

The town had come into being soon after a prospector, Henry Pelletier, discovered coal near the base of Turtle Mountain in the summer of 1900. Pelletier later sold his claim to Sam Gebo, who contacted a friend, Hon. H.L. Frank, of Butte, Montana, for money to develop the mine. Frank, a bearded and flamboyant entrepreneur who prided himself on getting things done quickly and in a big way, began developing the mine in the spring of 1901. Under his persuasion, a spur line was built from the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) mainline across a bridge spanning Oldman River, and up to the tippie at the mine entrance. Office buildings, houses and a boarding house were soon erected and such was the progress of the new mine that, by September, 1901, a 1,200-foot tunnel had been driven into the bowels of Turtle Mountain.

The main adit was about 30 feet above river level. On the flats west of Gold Creek, the company erected 25 cottages, a boardinghouse for single men and office buildings. That done the two partners, under the title of Canadian-American Coal Company, tried to attract business to their town, topping off the campaign by throwing a great opening extravaganza on September 10, 1901.

"The CPR got into the act," wrote Harold Fryer in *Alberta: The Pioneer Years*, "by running a special passen-

ger train in from Lethbridge with round-trip tickets costing \$2.25 from Lethbridge, \$1.40 from Macleod and a mere six bits from Pincher Creek. H.L. Frank missed the train that was to bring him from Spokane but, in his usual flamboyant style, hired a locomotive and caught up with the train at Moyie, B.C. Some 1,400 people showed up for that blowout in Frank. Included were Fred Haultain, Premier of the Northwest Territories and Clifford Sifton, Minister of the Interior in Prime Minister Wilfred Laurier's cabinet. Everyone gorged to stupefaction on a huge dinner that was climaxed by two tons of fruit and ice cream brought in from Spokane."

With Frank urging them on, the mine crew continued to forge deeper into the mountain, ripping out seams of coal from 10 to 12 feet wide in order to reach their objective of 1,000 tons a day. By the spring of 1903 they were more than 5,000 feet into the mountain.

Not to be outdone, and in keeping with the mine's progress the town, which now boasted a population of 600, had also taken on a new look with sidewalks, hitching racks and false-fronted buildings. It even had its own electricity and water supply.

Frank also boasted four hotels, two restaurants, a post office, a two-story school, a newspaper called the *Frank Sentinel*, a branch of the Union Bank of Canada, a combination grocery and furniture store, a liquor store, and a ladies' wear store. There were doctors, a dentist, a



(Above) Although upright, the Bansemer house was badly damaged by the slide. The men in front of it are standing on the rubble which buried the Clark house, killing Mrs. Clark and her six children. Mr. Clark was also killed when the slide demolished the mine tippie.

(Opposite page) An overhead drawing of the town of Frank and the devastating avalanche of April 29, 1903.

lawyer and insurance agent. There was a new hall, complete with stage and piano for concerts and dances. And there was a one-cow dairy. Business lots sold for \$400 to \$600, while residential lots went for \$250 and up. Frank seemed destined for booming prosperity, for, in less than three years, it had become a respectable little frontier town ministering to the miners, their families, the neighbouring ranchers and logging camps.

Then came the fateful night of April 29, 1903.

The freight train from MacLeod, with engineer Ben Murgatroyd at the throttle, wound its way slowly up the grade from Passburg to Frank with fireman Bud Lahey shovelling coal into the hungry firebox. To the rear, Conductor Henri Pettit checked his orders again while the brakemen, Sid Choquette and Bill Lowes, lounged half-asleep on their seats in the gondola.

Arriving at the Frank station, Pettit checked with T.B. Smith, the agent, and learned that the Spokane Flyer, which plied between Lethbridge and Spokane, was an hour-and-a-half late due to a snowstorm between Frank and MacLeod. This meant that it would not arrive until 4:30 a.m., and so the freight would have to stay on the siding until the Flyer passed. In the meantime there was work to be done.

With the train parked on the siding, the engine and crew continued to the mine where they were to pick up a number of coal cars. After these were hooked to the engine near the mine tipple, the two brakemen stopped for a moment to talk with the weigh-scale man, Tashigan, and two miners, Alex Clark and Fred Farrington, who had come out of the mine at 4 a.m. to eat their lunches.

Later, when the coal cars were coupled to the rest of the train, engineer Murgatroyd and the brakemen switched again to the spur line to spot one lone car. There, they saw Tashigan and the two miners still eating their lunches. Choquette set the car's brakes, unhooked it, and the engine rolled slowly down the tracks toward the mine bridge with the two brakemen following alongside on foot to work some warmth into their chilled bodies. It was then that a huge rock came down the mountain from high in the blackness above.

Murgatroyd, hearing the rumble and sensing danger, yelled at the two men and opened the throttle wide. With the extra steam, the big Mogul engine leaped ahead with wheels screaming against the steel rails. Alerted by the engineer's shout, the brakemen leaped for the handrail just as the engine spurted ahead. High above them, a great roar drowned out the sound of the first falling boulder, and 70,000,000 tons of limestone swept down from Turtle Mountain, driving a wall of freezing air before it.

The avalanche of rock swept over the mine entrance, wiping it off the map. It then crashed into the mine tipple, killing Tashigan, Clark and Farrington. A fraction of a second later it hurtled into the blacksmith shop and the lone railway car, both of which ended up two miles away on the far side of the valley. Seconds after the engine cleared the wooden bridge, rocks hit the bridge and toppled it into Oldman River. By the time the splintered structure settle in the water, the rocks were well on their way across the valley.

Ahead of the rock, the solid wall of freezing air

smashed cottages and shacks into kindling wood and carried their occupants hundreds of yards before the following avalanche of limestone buried many of them forever. One boulder, estimated to weigh 500 tons, came to rest in the town itself but did little damage. Such was the momentum of the slide that it swept across two miles of flatland and some of it went 500 feet up the opposite slope. And all this happened in 100 seconds.

In the aftermath of choking dust that rose above the slide and hung like a pall over the devastation, those townspeople who were lucky enough to have homes beyond the slide began searching for survivors among the wrecked houses, some of which had been set afire by upset stoves and space heaters. It seemed impossible that anyone caught in the path of the slide could still be alive, but there were survivors. Although their home was demolished, Sam and Lucy Ennis and their four children somehow escaped. When rescuers freed the family, along with Mrs. Ennis' brother, who had been sleeping in a room at the back of the house, they found an unexpected house guest. "Mrs. John Watkins, who had been sound asleep in her home next door to the Ennis', had been somehow flung from her bed and into the Ennis home when her home was crushed. She was suffering from shock and internal injuries and was bleeding from dozens of rock splinters, but she lived to tell of her escape. Her two teenage children likewise escaped, as did a younger daughter named Fernie. Altogether 23 people emerged from the rubble."

Many were found seriously injured; many others were dead. Alex Leitch, his wife and their four sons were all killed; but their two older daughters had survived, trapped in bed by a beam. The baby daughter Marion, however, was missing. Later it was learned that she had been thrown from the upper part of the house and had made a miraculous landing on a bale of hay that before the slide had been at a livery stable half a mile away. The body of Fred Farrington, one of the three who had been eating lunch at the mine tipple, was blown almost a quarter of a mile from the tipple by the air blast. Those of his two companions, Clark and Tashigan, were never found. Of the 76 persons that were missing, only 12 bodies were eventually recovered.

At first it seemed impossible that anyone in the mine itself could have survived. Although no mining was carried out at night, there was a 20-man maintenance crew in the mine when disaster struck. Farrington, Clark and Tashigan were outside and were killed. The remaining 17 were scattered throughout the mine when they felt the whole mountain shudder just after 4 a.m. One, Joe Chapman, was caught in a blast of air rushing along the tunnel and slammed heavily into the rock wall. Half-stunned, he struggled to his feet and headed for the mine entrance almost a mile away. Another, Dan McKenzie, was some three-quarters of a mile inside when he too, was knocked flat. Like Chapman, dazed but determined, he picked himself up and managed to continue on.

Eventually, all of the men reached what had once been the mine entrance, only to find it hopelessly blocked by hundreds of feet of debris. After a hurried consultation, all but one, Bill Warrington, whose leg was

injured, ran to the lower level hoping to find a means of escape. However, it was not to be; the lower tunnel was rapidly filling with water from the now dammed Oldman River.

Their immediate hopes dashed, the men trudged back to the main entrance for another look, trusting that it was not as hopeless as it had first seemed. To their dismay, they realized that escape in this direction was impossible. Suddenly they became aware of another serious problem: If the shafts that supplied air to the lower mine were sealed, their supply of air would soon be gone. There was also the possibility of gas pockets escaping into the air and fouling it. Realizing that they were facing a deadly calamity, three of the men lost little time in climbing 300 feet up ladders to an old worked-out section to investigate. When they reached their objective, their worst fears were realized; the air shafts were indeed cut off.

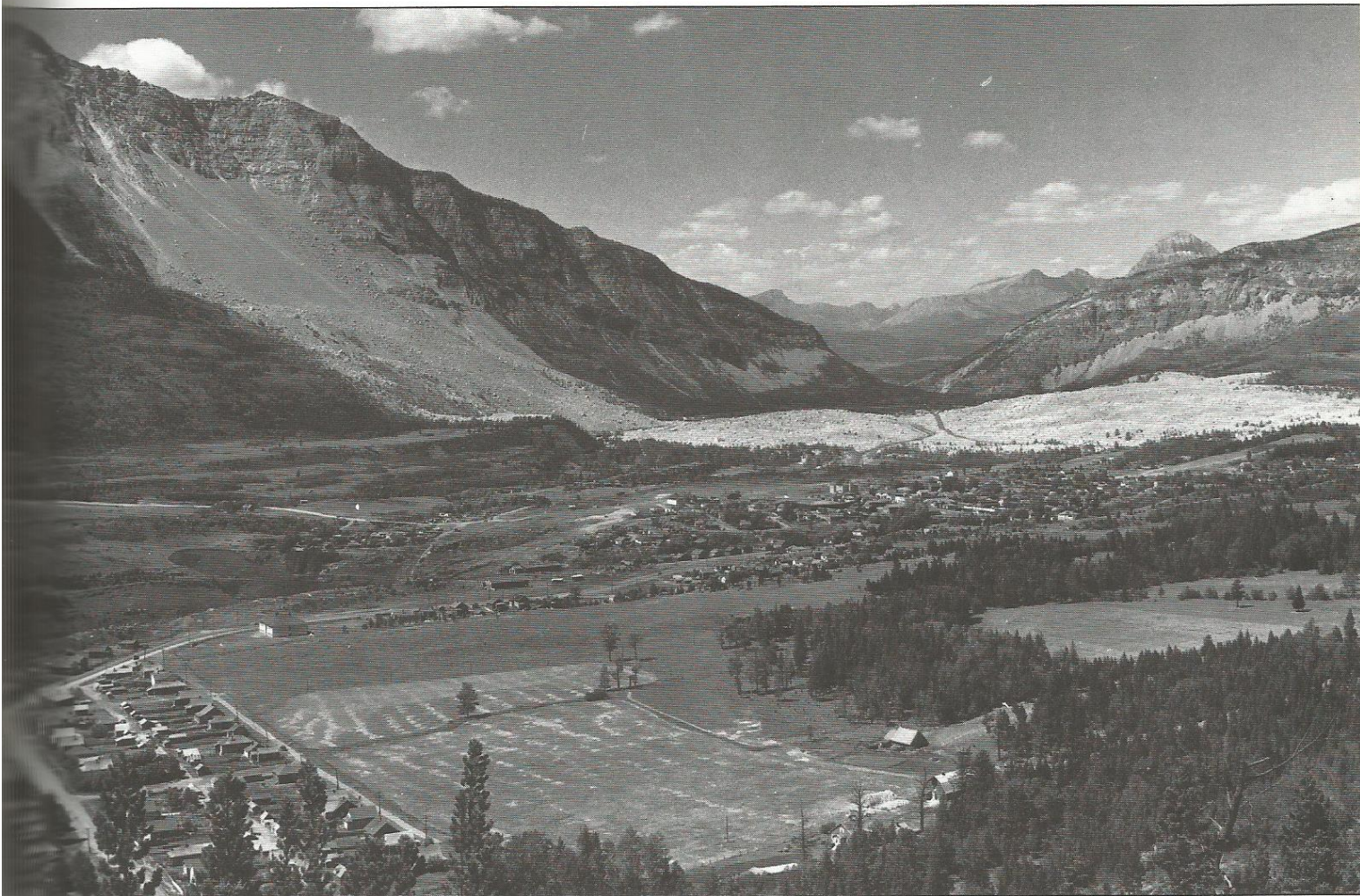
While those three men were scaling the ladders, others went back to where they had left their tools. Once the precious picks and shovels had been retrieved, they began the heartbreaking task of trying to dig themselves out. It was not until some time had passed that one of the men recalled that a narrow seam of coal ran upwards to

the outside of the mountain, close enough for them to dig to freedom. Spurred on by this new hope, the men set to work tunnelling upwards. Since only three miners could work the narrow seam at a time, they worked in relays, grimly aware that the supply of fresh air was slowly but surely diminishing.

For 12 long, backbreaking hours the men toiled grimly with pick and shovel. But with each foot of space gained, a corresponding amount of faith and optimism were lost. By five o'clock in the afternoon, all but Dan McKenzie and two companions sat or leaned against the walls, exhausted and utterly dejected, feeling their task was futile. But, as is often the case when their own lives are at stake, men achieve exceptional feats of determination and endurance. So it was with those three men, for their perseverance proved to be their salvation. McKenzie's pick finally drove through the coal into daylight. It was the first natural light that they had seen for hours and all breathed deeply of the clean fresh air.

The breakthrough seemed like a godsend to the desperate men and soon a hole big enough to crawl through had been chipped out of the coal seam. However, they were not free yet. Loose rock and boulders were still crashing down, making escape too dangerous to contemplate. But at least they now knew that they were no longer trapped — it was just a matter of time and they

A general view of the Frank slide in August, 1951.





would be free. They began driving another shaft up through 40 feet of mixed coal and clay with a newfound strength and eagerness. Finally, some 13 hours after being entombed, they emerged from the mountain behind a ledge of solid rock that protected them from the flying chunks and boulders of limestone.

Once free of the black dungeon, the miners stared aghast at the devastation below. Far in the distance, men were scrambling over rocks and boulders frantically searching for survivors in the debris. Then, 60 or 70 yards below and to the left, McKenzie saw a number of men grouped around the spot where the mine entrance had been. Not having been noticed by the would-be rescuers, McKenzie let out a shout that caused the men below to look up in astonishment. Then in a wild frenzy, and disregarding their own safety, they scrambled recklessly among the still falling rocks to greet the miners whom they had presumed dead.

For Bill Warrington, however, the joy of the meeting was brief. He could see that the place where his house had stood was buried under tons of limestone, and the expression on other men's faces was all the proof he needed that his worst fears were realized. His wife, three children and his good friend Alex Dixon, had been swept into oblivion.

Despite the disaster, the town of Frank did not die, although for a time the residents did move away. Nine days after the slide the mountain seemed to have stabilized and Premier Haultain announced that residents could return to their homes and businesses. Thanks to Inspector Primrose and his troops, there had been no looting. The mine reopened and remained in operation until 1917 when it was no longer competitive.

For a town that had faced a disaster of such magnitude, Frank continued to have a carefree and boisterous existence. Throughout most of its life it was a rip-roaring mining town in the most literal sense. It grew to a booming town of 800, where hotel bars stayed open until the early morning hours and one banker reportedly slept in his bank with four revolvers near the head of his bed,

loaded and ready for action. There were murders, too, not the least of which was that of Monte Lewis, one of the many prostitutes who plied their trade in Frank.

The murder occurred one night in November, 1901. Constable Martin of the NWMP was patrolling his beat when he noticed a light streaming from an open door of the house occupied by Monte Lewis. That seemed strange to him for it was late, long past the hour when even ladies of the night like Monte had retired. When there was no reply to his knock, Martin decided to look inside. "Like most policemen," wrote Harold Fryer, "he was not a complete stranger to violent crime, but he certainly was not prepared for this one. The bedroom was splattered from floor to ceiling with blood; on the bed lay the remains of Monte Lewis, who had been fiendishly mutilated by dozens of stab wounds and her skull fractured by what must have been a prolonged and savage beating."

A motive for the murder was never discovered. Some suspected robbery, since a diamond necklace and earrings were missing. Others suspected it was revenge, pointing the finger at a man named Max Pylyczul, who lived with Monte for a time. Pylyczul was apprehended and tried on May 7-9, 1908. But when witness Sam Ching could not positively identify Pylyczul as the person he saw leaving Monte's house on the night of the murder, he was acquitted. To this day, the murder has not been solved.

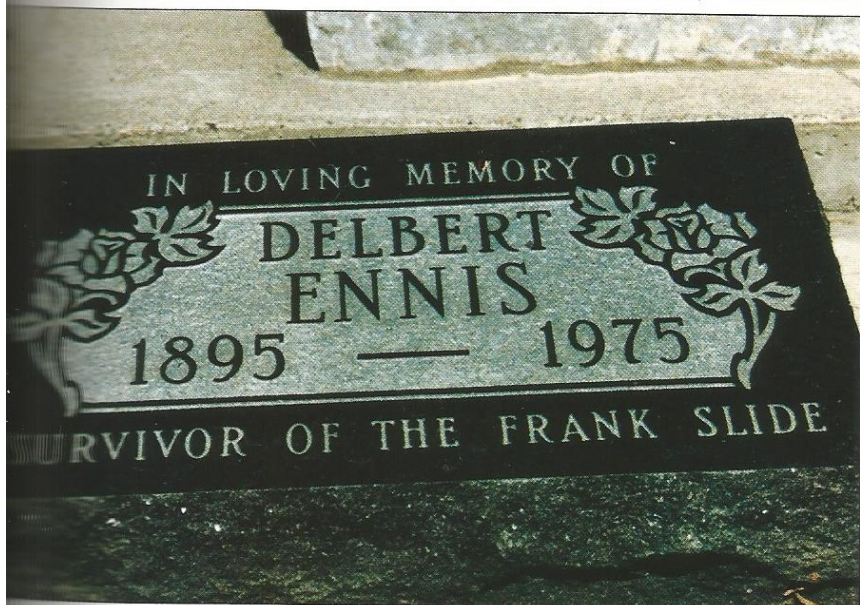
Today, with approximately 180 residents, Frank is but a shell of its former self. But it seems in little danger of further decline, for it has a couple of stores, service stations and a busy motor inn, and the aftermath of the disastrous slide is now a tourist attraction.

It will never be known just how many people perished in the massive slide, for men drifted in and out of Frank every day. Nor did anyone know the number of men who were employed at the railway construction camp because all records and the camp itself were wiped out. However, it was learned that at least 16 men, women and children lost their lives.

What triggered the slide will forever remain a mystery. There was no earthquake reported, nor had any explosions been set off within the mine that night. There was, however an old Indian legend, handed down from generation to generation, and also familiar to the early trappers and ranchers in that part of the country, that Indians would never camp near the base of "The Mountain That Walked." They insisted that the mountain had been rumbling and moving since the dawn of history, and was to be avoided at all times. Fiction or fact the legend became a reality on the night of April 29, 1903. ❀

(Left) A general view of Turtle Mountain, showing the slide that wiped out part of Frank, Alberta.

(Below) Headstone of Dennis Ennis, one of the survivors of the Frank slide.



COAL DUST DAYS IN CANMORE

Times have changed for the former coal mining town of Canmore, Alberta, which, today, is poised on the eve of a tourist boom.

Canmore, Alberta, in 1886. Some of the commercial buildings shown include: S.C. Vick's, watchmaker; E.L. Smith & Co., hardware & tinware; and the MacNulty Bros. general store.

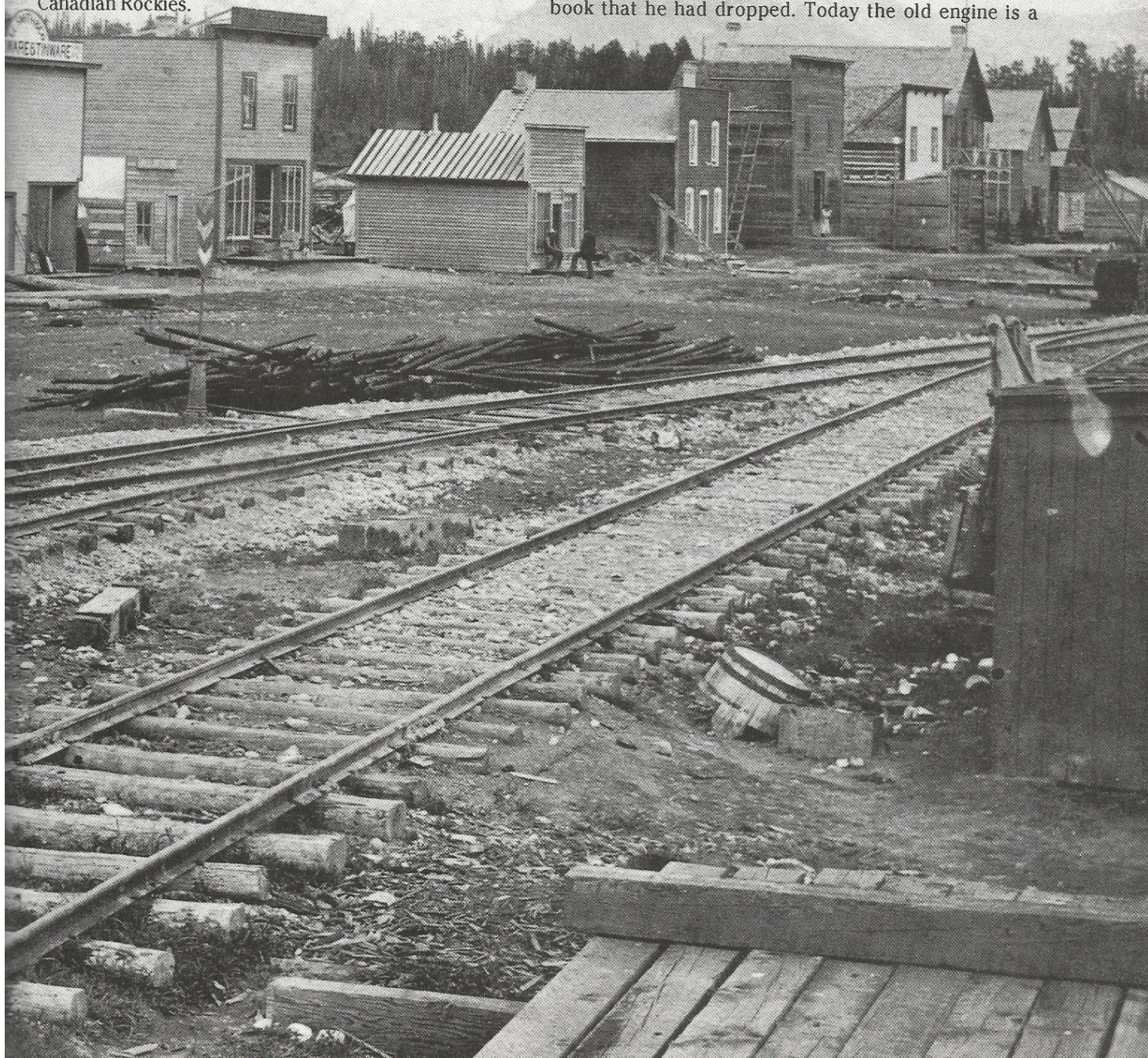


LOCATED 60 miles west of the Calgary city limits, the major gateway to the Canadian Rockies since 1883, Canmore was one of the most colourful mining towns in Canada. The coal mining operation, which sustained the town, closed down in 1979. It was a victim of Japan's disappearing steam coal market; a development which first became apparent soon after the Second World War, when the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) switched from steam to diesel locomotives.

The leap from historic mining town to a tourist attraction has seen the town's population double since 1966 to more than 3,000. Of these, certainly some of its older residents must think back to the days when Canmore's mixed ethnic population, drawn from the coal producing areas of the world, made it a miniature League of Nations. Each working day the miners rode mine cars to the working face, two and a half miles under the Three Sisters mountain, one of the most beautiful peaks in the Canadian Rockies.

In the hundred years of coal mining in Western Canada, operational and equipment changes came slowly. Working below ground was a physical challenge that demanded strength and agility to meet production, to stay alive and to prevent accidents. After the coal was loosened by shots of dynamite, it was loaded by two-man teams into coal cars. These two-ton cars were then pulled to the tippie at the surface on steel cables, where the rock was hand sorted. Finally, the coal clattered down a chute and into railroad cars for shipment.

The mine supplied its own steam locomotive, affectionately called the "old goat," to pull the cars to the CPR yard, two miles from the mine. To Canmore school children the engineer, fireman and switchman were heroes. For the boys, stealing a ride on the "old goat" was a constant challenge. Fortunately, over the years, only one of the daring youngsters received a minor mishap — a two-inch cut to a knee when he foolishly reached for a school book that he had dropped. Today the old engine is a



choice working exhibit at Calgary's Heritage Park, where it does duty drawing sightseeing cars.

The first crew, consisting of nearly a hundred Chinese outside mine surface workers, was recruited from the gangs that had helped construct CPR trackage through the area. They lived in a long barn-like building at the mine-site. Each Chinese had his own cubicle, much like a prison cell without the steel bars, but lacking the comforts of today's jails. Due to the federal immigration laws of that era, there were no Chinese women in the group. Occasionally a prostitute would be sneaked into their large living quarters, where she did a land-office business. In return, she brought some needed physical and psychological relief to the Chinese workers.

Each man cooked his own meals and attended to his own laundry and housekeeping. On rare occasions, in

groups of three to five, the men would find relaxation by walking in single file and talking in their native sing-song language. None of the Chinese were interested in sport activities; it being rumoured among the white residents that their "slow reflexes" made contact and action sports an impossibility. Instead, they spent much of their time playing fan tan, other Chinese gambling games and black-jack.

Wage disputes and demands for better working conditions gave the Canmore miners many strikes and work stoppages. Some lasted only weeks, others dragged on for months. One of the larger shutdowns was terminated by a mounted policeman's horse.

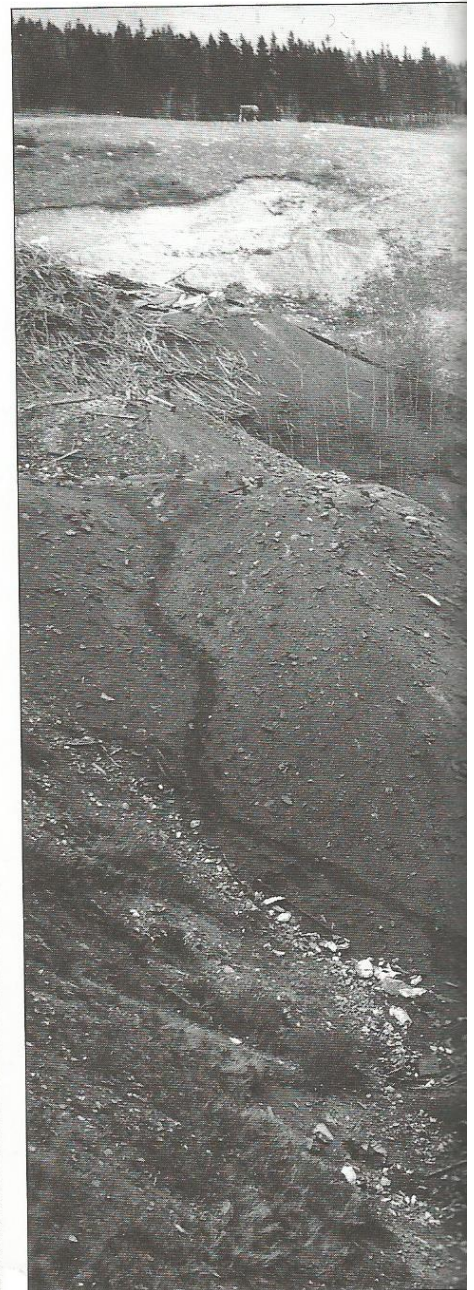
In a final, drastic bid to bring management into line, 50 miners' wives had decided to prevent the men who worked the air and water pumps from entering the mine.



(Right) The coal mining operation at Canmore, Alberta.

(Left) Mine rescue team competing at sports day, Canmore, July 1, 1923. The hospital is in the background.

(Below) A group having a meal outside a log house in Canmore.



Their plan was simple and they chose a perfect site for their demonstration, a point where the narrow wagon road passed between two 20-foot-high rocks near the entrance to the mine.

The women reasoned that they could stop the early-morning, non-union shift, who were escorted by four RCMP officers, from going to work. The women planned to block access by squatting in the roadway in full belief that there would be no violence.

When the police escort first approached the human blockade, there was a "Mexican Stand Off." The corporal in charge then halted his men and rode forward to inform the women that unless they allowed the workers to report for work, the mine, in a few hours, would be a "dead working" — flooded and filled with poisonous gases.

But the women were adamant and refused to move from the roadway. The corporal's horse moved slowly to within a few feet of the squatting demonstrators, then reared so suddenly that the rider was nearly thrown from the saddle. The women, fearing that they were about to be trampled, screamed and ran. The day was saved and the strike was settled within a week.

In any mining town the members of the mine rescue team were a very important part of the community. Rescue three miles underground, while the grinding and groaning of a weakened roof signalled another cave-in, was a job for the brave, the strong and the skilled. The members were thoroughly professional and trained to answer any accident situation. They were also qualified to the highest standards of the St. John Ambulance Society. Canmore teams were highly devoted to duty,



public service and the welfare of miners, and saved many lives and won their share of awards in Canadian annual competitions.

The first rescue station was housed in a converted CPR passenger coach. The men were equipped with resuscitators, called "pull motors" in the pioneer days, and various portable gear for use at the surface and deep in the mine.

As perhaps, this daring occupation would indicate, coal miners are gamblers. Thus it's not surprising that it was a \$50 bet by a Chinese worker that earned the name Chinaman's Peak for one of the highest mountains overlooking Canmore.

The man bragged that he could leave the floor of the valley, climb to the top of the mountain, and be back to the starting point in six hours. It was the 10 to one odds against him that inspired the challenge to attempt to become the first person to climb the mountain.

The test started at dawn on a fine Sunday summer morning. It was two hours before the climber reached the timber line and came into view of the entire population of Canmore. His progress to the top was then observed through a single telescope and, throughout the gruelling race, side bets were placed by the observers.

The interest was highest when the climber was lost to view after he rounded a rock outcropping. Then he signalled from the mountaintop with a white sheet (that fluttered from the peak for many years, a challenge and a guide to other climbers). The Chinese climber then returned to Canmore, winning the gruelling contest with 20 minutes to spare.

Unfortunately, there were only two career opportunities available to young people in the early days of

Canmore. For the girls it was marriage; for the boys it was a job in the mines. The objective of the boys was to serve as rock pickers on the tippie and then to go underground as miners, with their father, brothers, uncles or a friend of the family; "once a miner always a miner," was the belief in those days.

Marriages played a very important social function in Canmore. The normal wedding celebration, especially for the families that had immigrated from the Ukraine, was a several day event. Three or more private homes were used for the nuptials — one for the drinking, another for the feasting and a third for the dancing.

Dancing with the bride was a highlight of most of the weddings and quite a money raiser. Each guest who danced with the ever-willing bride marked the honour by dropping money into a collection pot, usually a large baking dish or washtub. The more popular the newlyweds, the more money they collected.

When the guests became overcome by liquor, food or exhaustion, they simply excused themselves and went home for a rest. They later returned, refreshed, to the bridal party.

One of Canmore's most successful weddings had an unusual start when the groom spoke his "I do" at the wrong time in the ceremony. He spoke his line loudly and clearly when the minister said, "Is there any person in this assembly that knows any good reason why this couple should not be united in holy matrimony?"

Despite the groom's "I do," the ceremony, after an embarrassing pause, continued as scheduled. Recently, the couple celebrated 65 years of happily married life.

Twice each year, on Christmas Eve and July 1, the Canmore coal miners hosted the two largest parties of



the year. The Christmas party, held in the large Miner's Union Hall, was the most spectacular and always played to a packed audience. The guests were all children up to 17 years of age. The entertainment consisted of acts performed by the youngsters.

The star was Santa Claus. For many years the part was played by hoistman Bob Hunter, who spoke with a brogue that deceived none of the guests. Each year he claimed that he had arrived, after much difficulty, in a sled drawn by reindeer. The children heard the sleigh bells, but they never saw the sled. Nevertheless, they never doubted his word.

There were 17 selections of gifts, one for each age, purchased at cost from the company store.

The Dominion Day party was an all-ages sports day which began with a decorated float parade and foot races and terminated with baseball and soccer games. It was a day of unlimited ice cream, soft drinks and candy for the children.

"Indian Days," a tourist attraction staged annually in Banff, 15 miles to the west, for many years had a preview showing at Canmore. The Indians travelled by horses from the Morley Indian Reserve and made their overnight stop near Canmore. It was always a spectacular, action-packed scene: the teepees being pitched, the squaws cooking meals over open fires, the white and Indian children standing in little groups, eying each other shyly, then playing together.

Occasionally a miner would buy a horse from one of the Indians, a transaction that often ended in a loss to the buyer. The pony, on the first occasion that it was free, would start the long trek back to the Indian reserve. Not a single stray was ever recovered.

Trade between the whites and the Indians was made in cash for buckskin objects, beadwork and artifacts. Each winter, some of the Canmore school teachers found the pungent odour of hand-made moccasins offensive.

For the early coal miners the only shopping centre was the large Canmore Coal Company general store. Purchase books against the earnings of the miner was the rule and made bookkeeping simple. Workers drew the purchase books at the mine office in denominations of \$10 and \$20, which was charged to their next pay.

Under this system some miners, especially those with large families, could go for years without handling cash. When a miner's purchases at the company store was greater than his earnings, his pay slip would show what they called "goose eggs," or a minus sign, on the bottom line.

Sport was a high priority activity in Canmore. Even in the distant days of seven-man hockey the local team was rated by the daily press as "among the

best in western Canada." For seven consecutive years the Canmore Miners won the Western Canadian Senior Hockey Championship.

The most spectacular and colourful games in the early days were those played in a league consisting of Banff, Bankhead (a long abandoned mining town) and Canmore. The contests were always crucial, fast, skilled and often brutal. No quarter was asked and none was given.

All league games were played on open-air, uncovered rinks, often in below zero weather. Banff had the best ice surface, a rink located on a backwater of the Bow River, less than a hundred yards from the centre of town and the zoo. Often the cheering of the frenzied fans was drummed out by the roar of the caged animals, as they serenaded the moon and the passing CPR trains.

The most active fans were women, many of whom thought it fun and fair game to hit opposing players with clubs and pick-axe handles when they came into range. In the late 1930s, Canmore supplied many of the star players for the Pacific Coast, then the National, hockey leagues.

Canmore had the first medicare plan in Canada, dating back to the 1890s. The project was operated through the company, the miners having \$1 a month deducted from their bi-monthly wages. The plan provided for a doctor, a nurse and a four-bed hospital.

In the 1920s, just before the stock market crash that heralded the depression, Canmore became the first centre in Canada to provide free school supplies and textbooks to students. It was a natural breakthrough. The Canmore Coal Company, as property owners, paid the major share of the taxes and the majority of the school board members were miners. There was no dissenting vote against the resolution.

It was a windfall that ensured each student of a high school education and meant that the best of each class had an opportunity for university education. ❀



(Opposite page) A view of Canmore and H.W. McNeil Company's brass band, c1900. The Canmore Opera House is on extreme right. (Right) The Canmore hockey team in 1929.

STERN-WHEELERS ON THE SASKATCHEWAN

When considering Canada's marine history it hardly seems likely that the two landlocked provinces, Alberta and Saskatchewan, would have a contribution to make. But they do. And the very unlikelihood of the accounts make the telling all the more colourful.



IN the early days of Canadian exploration and development, inland rivers were the main highways of transportation. Explorer, fur trader, missionary, Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) entrepreneur, North West Mounted Police, and settler alike found these natural waterways the swiftest means of forging westward.

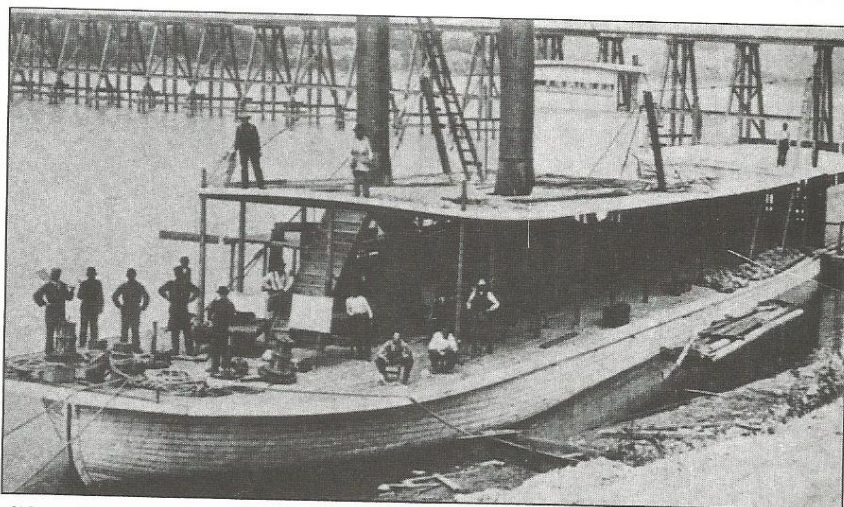
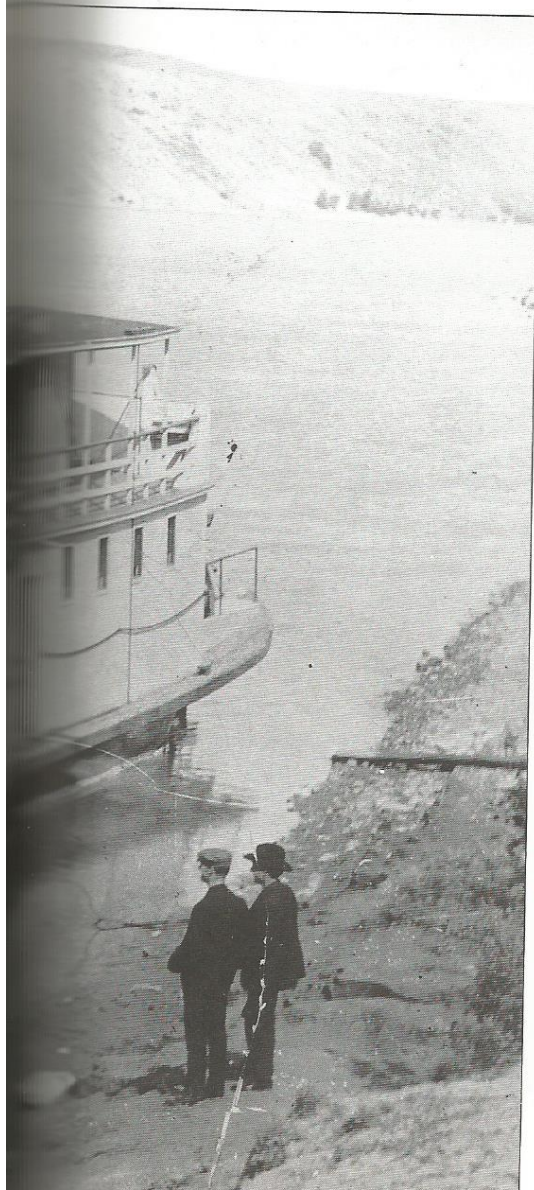
On the prairies, the principal river thoroughfare was the Saskatchewan River with its twin branches, the North Saskatchewan and the South Saskatchewan. Both branches found their source in the Rockies, the North Saskatchewan winding its way up past Fort Edmonton and across to Fort Pitt, Battleford, and Carlton House (just east of present-day Prince Albert). The South Saskatchewan joined it there from its course through Medicine Hat and up past the new Temperance Colony of Saskatoon. East of Carlton House the two converged to become one mighty waterway, coursing up through the picturesque lake country, past Cumberland House, The Pas, Grand Rapids, and on down to Lake Winnipeg.

Westbound travellers, upon reaching Winnipeg, could journey by boat up the Red River to Lake Winnipeg where there was clear sailing north until Grand Rapids,

the seven-mile-long obstacle course that separated the lake from the Saskatchewan River highway. For years the Grand Rapids were negotiated by arduous portage until the early 1880s when the Northwest Navigation Company (NNC) had a 12-mile roadway built to circumvent them. This enabled freight and passengers to be transported by team from lake-front to river-boat.

By the time the Grand Rapids roadway was built, steamboat travel on the Saskatchewan was well established. Recognizing the immense economic potential in such a venture, the HBC, the NNC, and other corporate and private entrepreneurs of the day had launched whole fleets of steam-powered river-boats to service the "great Northern trade" that was expanding and flourishing with the settlement of the West. Between the early 1880s and 1908, as many as 15 fully operational steamers of the Mississippi river-boat variety plied the waters of the Saskatchewan River.

It was a seasonal trade, totally dependent upon spring thaw and winter freeze-up. In the fall boats were drawn up on the riverbank for the winter and re-launched as soon as the ice went out in the spring. The



(Above) *The Alberta under construction at Medicine Hat.*
(Left) *The City of Medicine Hat about to depart with a load of tourists.*
(Below) *The Minnow about to be launched at Medicine Hat in 1884.*



first trip of the year was usually made on high water, river levels being swelled by spring run-off. Later in the season thawing snow cover in the Rocky Mountains would cause a second surge.

Though river travel under spring conditions had its own hazards, there were just as many problems later on in the season. The Saskatchewan River, known for its capriciousness, seemed determined to challenge its would-be navigators.

Seething waters well worthy of the "swift current" meaning of the river's Indian name, unpredictable water levels, treacherous rapids, hidden shoals and shifting sandbars, all demanded navigational skills and an expertise one would hardly expect to find in a landlocked part of the globe. But the wave of immigration had brought an unlikely blend of characters to the prairies. Among them were ship's captains and seasoned seafaring men. Not everyone understood their idiosyncrasies.

One story tells of a German sea captain who owned a homestead on the prairies besides an alkali lake. Neighbours hinted that some dark secret had driven him so far from the sea.

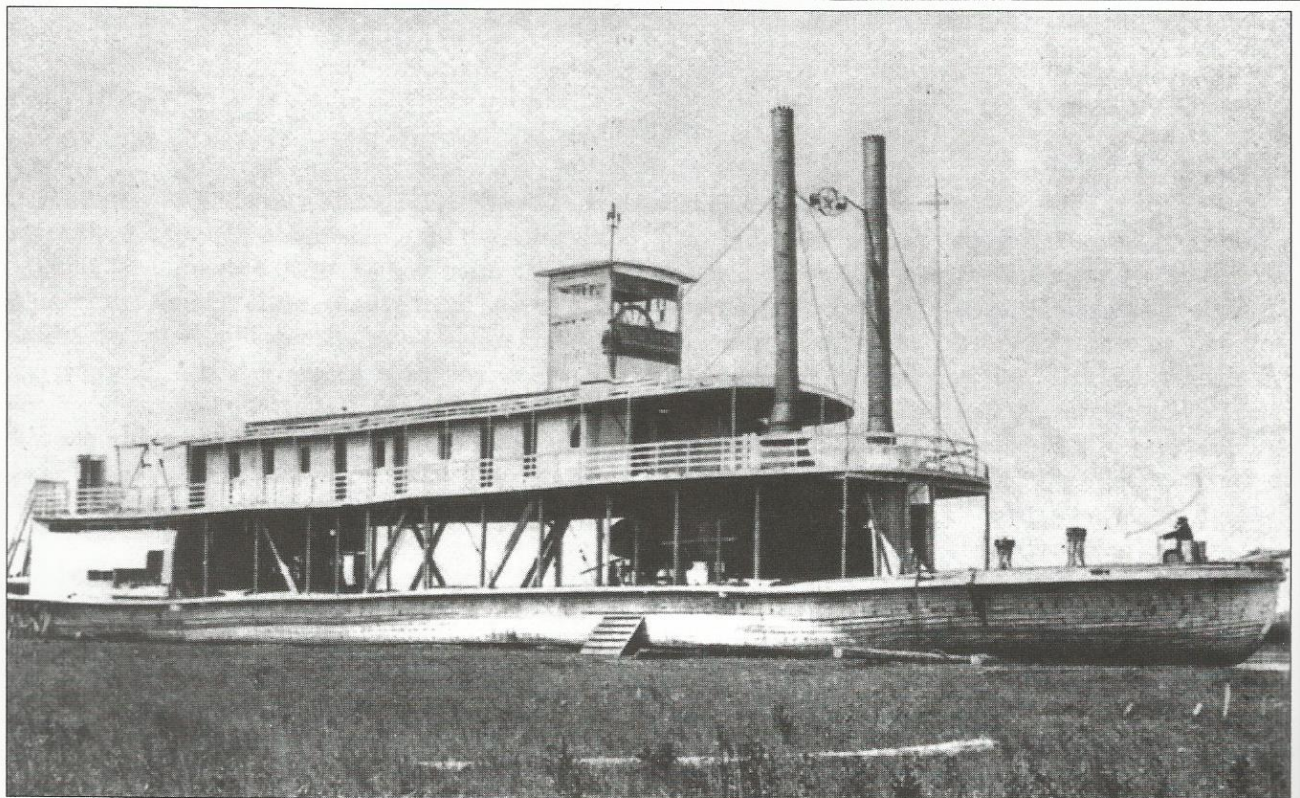
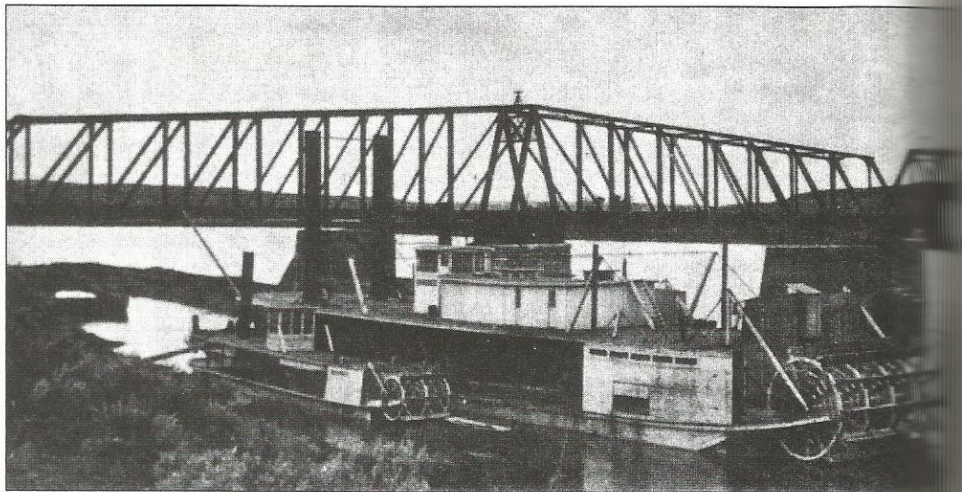
Another story came from a traveller who became lost on the prairies one night. After wandering for hours he chanced to see a light

and in it, the silhouette of a man. Following the light, the traveller found an old sailor living in a sod house. The seaman, used to going below to his cabin, had placed the door of his sod shack on the roof. It was his custom to go "on deck" for one last look at the weather before turning in for the night. In so doing he spared the life of a lost wanderer.

Perhaps even more surprising than the ready supply of competent navigators was the presence of boat yards on the prairies. A thriving operation was situated in Medicine Hat.

The first steamer said to have been built west of the Red River was the *Baroness*, a stern-wheel paddle steamer constructed in 1883 at Coal Banks (later renamed Lethbridge) for the North West Coal and Navigation Company (NWC&NC). It was owned by Elliot Galt and

(Right) *The Minnow and Baroness* docked beside the railway bridge at Medicine Hat in 1884.
(Below) *The HBC's Northcote*.



financed by his father, Sir Alexander Galt. Built mainly of timber from the Porcupine Hills to the west, the hull was floated down the Oldman River to Medicine Hat where it was fitted with boilers and engines shipped by rail from Pittsburg.

When navigation season opened in the spring of 1884, Galt's NWC&NC had three Alberta-built steamers, the *Baroness*, *Alberta*, and *Minnow*, and 25 barges ready to transport coal down the Oldman and South Saskatchewan rivers to Medicine Hat for stockpiling and dispersal to points beyond. Sir Alexander Galt's personal account reveals how unreliable that particular part of the river route could be:

"In 1884 I waited at Medicine Hat for water until after the twenty-fourth of May, and by the 28 of June our boats and barges were tied up for the season." The following year the company built a narrow-gauge railroad to move their coal between the two centres.

However, Galt's coal fleet steamboats did not fade into obscurity just yet. They were to play a noteworthy — if dubious — role in the militia's campaign against Louis Riel in the 1885 Rebellion.

As Bruce Peel writes in his book *Steamboats on the Saskatchewan*: "When the second Riel Rebellion broke out at Batoche on the South Saskatchewan in March, 1885, the river steamers were still in their winter quarters. Three vessels of the Winnipeg and Western Transportation Company were in the Prince Albert area. The previous fall the *Marquis* and the *Manitoba* had been run into the mouth of the Sturgeon River five miles west of Prince Albert. The *North West* was drawn up on the bank in the town itself."

The *Northcote*, the Winnipeg Company's remaining vessel was on the bank in Medicine Hat. So were the Galt ships: the *Baroness*, *Alberta*, and *Minnow*.

Since the vessels beached at Prince Albert were behind enemy lines, they were of little use to the militia. So General Middleton wired a directive from the front asking that a crew be sent at once to Medicine Hat to man the *Northcote* and start her down river with soldiers and supplies for the relief of Battleford. The three steamers and 20 coal barges owned by Galt were chartered to follow with 350 tons of war supplies.

Middleton's strategy called for coinciding his assault on Batoche with the arrival of the *Northcote*, so he delayed his march for four days — unwisely, at it turned out. The trip to the front, which Captain Segers had estimated would take four days, took 14. Lower than normal water levels were the reason, and as a result the *Northcote* spent more hours aground than afloat. In a single day, it was stranded no fewer than 11 times. On each occasion the troops aboard had to shift cargo between the steamer and the two barges it was towing to reduce draught and allow the vessel to manoeuvre off the shoal.

Frustrated with the slow progress of the *Northcote*, Major-General Laurie, commandant of bases and lines of supply, dispatched a message to the *Minnow* some distance to the rear, ordering it to steam down river to the yet-again stranded *Northcote* and take aboard the hospital surgeons, the Gatling gun, and munitions for the nine-pounders. The nimble *Minnow* was to deliver them

posthaste to General Middleton at Clark's Crossing.

Unfortunately, the *Minnow's* captain was guided by a misplaced sense of responsibility. His determination to tow a barge loaded with 10 tons of oats belonging to a customer slowed the boat's passage dramatically, and it did not arrive at Clark's Crossing until well after the *Northcote*. Needless to say, there were few accolades for the *Minnow* or her captain in their war efforts.

Since General Middleton's plan was to send the *Northcote* down river to fire upon the rebel stronghold of Batoche while his main body of troops attacked from land, the steamer had to be made defensible against musket fire. To achieve this, a double casing of two-inch planking (from Gabriel Dumont's stable) was used to armour plate the lower deck. As well, the pool table from Dumont's "stopping-place" was taken aboard to be employed as a shield for the soldiers — an act that was to cause General Middleton embarrassment later when the Canadian Parliament accused him of countenancing pillage.

Despite these extra precautions, Bruce Peel relates, when the battle was joined, "it was found that the half-inch thick wood of the boat's superstructure did not stop bullets. The invalid soldiers in the cabins had to roll out of their bunks and place mattresses and bolsters against the walls. The pilot house was the most exposed position of all, and it was toward this control centre that the rebels directed much of their fire."

The *Northcote* was to co-ordinate her progress on the river with the militia's attack on land and create a diversion to allow the militia a frontal attack on the Metis. Unfortunately, the captain was unable to control his steamboat, encumbered as it was by its two loaded side barges. The current swept the boat down river more quickly than planned and when it rounded the river bend above Batoche, it was met with a barrage of rebel lead from both sides of the river.

Adding to the dilemma were two ferry cables spanning the river immediately ahead. At Dumont's order, the rebels began to lower the heavy cable in the hope of fouling the *Northcote's* progress. The pilot, believing their only chance to escape was to break the cable, ordered "full steam ahead."

Observers claimed the *Northcote* bounded fully 20 feet in the air when it struck the powerful hawser. The cable hit the hurricane deck, shearing off the top of the wheelhouse and sending the smokestacks crashing onto the deck. The disabled vessel continued downstream for several miles, valiantly returning the rebel's fire, before she was able to drop anchor and assess the damage.

It was discovered that the whistle — the *Northcote's* means of signalling the boat's position to General Middleton — was down. It was the first thing to be repaired.

The military men on board wanted to turn back upriver immediately to rejoin the battle, but Captain Segers was adamantly disinclined to expose himself in the unfortified wheelhouse again. After some persuasion, the ship's carpenter agreed to go aloft and nail thicker lumber to the outside. His reward was a rebel bullet in the heel.

Eventually the *Northcote* was sufficiently fortified to suit the captain and pilot, and she proceeded to the rendezvous in Batoche. She arrived to find the village had already fallen.

In the days that followed the skirmish, the *Northcote* was able to redeem herself by evacuating the wounded to the field hospital in Saskatoon. Perhaps most notable among her passengers was the rebel chief, Louis Riel, who spent the night aboard under heavy guard before being transferred to trial and subsequent execution in Regina.

At its zenith, steamboat travel on the Saskatchewan was a sophisticated operation. Passengers loading at every port of call along the river were offered the luxury of cabins, saloons, and lavishly appointed dining-rooms.

On April 30, 1881, the *Winnipeg Daily Times* carried a detailed description of one steamer, the *City of Winnipeg*, about to embark on her maiden voyage on the northwest river system. The *City of Winnipeg* measured an impressive 190 feet in length, including the paddle wheel, and was fitted with 10 more than the usual staterooms, each with spring mattresses "for the increased comfort of the passengers," and a large convenient washroom and barbershop. As well, there were safety features like wider guards and four-and-a-half-foot railings. A special facility on board for shipping stock could accommodate as many as 150 horses. All this, however, was eclipsed by the amenities of wall-to-wall carpets, chandeliers, mammoth pier glass, and — a piano.

It is doubtful that the *City of Medicine Hat*, built some 25 years later, equalled the *City of Winnipeg* in splendour. Nevertheless, she was touted as being the most modern vessel of her kind in the West. What makes the *City of Medicine Hat* even more significant is the story of her untimely demise and how that spelled the end to a memorable era.

The *City of Medicine Hat* was built in Medicine Hat on the commission of Capt. H.H. Ross, a pioneer businessman and steamboat captain who had already made a name for himself in the river boat business. Sleek and trim, the 130-foot stern-wheeler was designed expressly for river navigation, and had a steaming force capacity of 125 h.p. Equipped with all the best in steam-power machinery and the most modern fittings and furnishings, the *City of Medicine Hat* had cost \$30,000. The vessel boasted 50 berths and was licensed to carry about 250 people, in keeping with the captain's intention to run her primarily as an excursion boat.

On this particular occasion, however, the *City of Medicine Hat* was carrying considerably less than a capacity load. She had left her home port of Medicine Hat on May 29, 1908, on a pleasure cruise and business trip to Winnipeg. In addition to her crew and five passengers, she carried a plentiful supply of provisions, hunting and fishing equipment, and the 50 tons of coal needed to fuel the ship's engines for the voyage. Messrs. H.C. Yuill and W.B. Marshall, heads of the Medicine Hat Milling Company were among the passengers. They were bringing a considerable cargo of flour from their mill, some to be used on the journey, the balance to be sold in Winnipeg. Alas, it was never to arrive.

The first week of the voyage had been uneventful. The 400-mile stretch down river to Saskatoon was taken in easy stages, sailing during the day and tying up each night at points along the way. The steamer had spent the night of June 6 tied up at the ferry landing opposite Hanley. The following morning the *City of Medicine Hat* got underway on the final leg of its journey to Saskatoon.

It had been a long winter with plenty of snow and the spring run-off had swelled the South Saskatchewan River, increasing its speed and the strength of its flow to a furious pitch.

These conditions posed no threat to Captain Ross, however. While he recognized the potential dangers, he was a seasoned navigator, a German naval sea captain who had made this same trip a half dozen times by steamer or canoe. His peers considered him one of the most experienced river navigators in western Canada.

On this particular Monday morning, as they started down river, Captain Ross was keeping a wary eye on the level of the river. It had risen significantly since the day before and the captain well knew the problems they could encounter once they reached the city of Saskatoon with its several river-spanning bridges.

It was not yet noon when they sighted the first bridge, the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway Bridge on the western outskirts of Saskatoon. The closer they got, the more apparent it became that the river was too high for the *City of Medicine Hat* to pass safely underneath the bridge.

Captain Ross steered the boat ashore and tied up just above the bridge. They would wait there, he said, until the water level dropped a foot or so. On his advice, the passengers disembarked — wisely, as it turned out — and were driven downtown fully expecting to join up with the stern-wheeler when she had safely negotiated all three city bridges.

Instead of receding, however, the river rose higher. Now it was a full six feet above its highest mark of the previous year. The current was running at a brisk eight to 10 m.p.h., creating a dangerously strong force. Eventually Captain Ross calculated that by removing the vessel's smokestack, she would be able to slip through the 24-foot space beneath the bridge and the water.

He was right. In the early afternoon a more streamlined *City of Medicine Hat* cleared the railway bridge and proceeded eastward toward the heart of the city.

Near the powerhouse she tied up again while the captain personally went ashore to measure the space under the second bridge, that of the Canadian Northern Railway. With only inches to spare, the *City of Medicine Hat* passed beneath that one, too.

Having successfully negotiated past the first two bridges, it was Captain Ross's intention to steer ashore once again and take measurements of the final obstacle, the Victoria Street bridge. Nine months old almost to the day, it was Saskatoon's one and only traffic and pedestrian bridge. But here the captain's careful plans went awry.

As the swift surging current of the South Saskatchewan hurtled the stern-wheeler under the second railway bridge, the boat had caught on some telephone wires spanning the river. The wires snapped and



The wreck of the City of Medicine Hat on June 7, 1908.

became entangled in the steering gear. Captain Ross, who was personally manning the wheel, soon realized the boat was unmanageable. His only alternative was to order full steam astern and hope they could run the boat safely aground on the bank.

But alas, the current was too strong. Totally out of control, the big boat rammed into one of the new bridge's heavy steel girders. She swung around wildly, her stern slewing up and over the base of a nearby pier. For a few minutes she hovered upright, then the rushing river keeled her over. Within seconds the water of the South Saskatchewan was strewn with bobbing bits of baggage, furniture and life preservers.

The engineer dove into the water, to surface a considerable distance downstream. The rest of the crew abandoned ship safely. Captain Ross, vigilant at his post at the wheel, narrowly missed being crushed to death when the wheelhouse snapped like dry kindling against the steel bridge girders. Miraculously, no one was injured.

It was said the danger of being seriously injured was just as strong among the mass of spectators crowding the pedestrian bridge that afternoon as it was on the cap-sized vessel. For, at the height of the excitement a group of cowboys came riding down Broadway Avenue running a herd of cattle before them. Unable to stop, the animals surged onto the bridge, forcing their way through the crowd and on to the other end of the span. Luckily, no lives were lost there, either.

There were losses of another kind, however. The coal-carrying barge being towed behind the *City of Medicine Hat* capsized during the collision, spilling its

entire 50-ton cargo into the river. Even more significant was Ross's personal loss of the \$30,000 he had invested in the steamboat. The only insurance she carried was against fire. It was not Captain Ross's first financial setback; he had already lost a steamer, the *Assiniboia*, to the relentless Saskatchewan the previous season. But ever undaunted, Ross moved on from this to organize the Ross Navigation Company, a river freighting service that operated for some years out of The Pas.

For the *City of Medicine Hat*'s passengers, the disaster spelled an end of a pleasant river voyage. The following day they all left for home by rail.

The loss to the Canadian prairies was, perhaps, the most poignant. The wreck of the *City of Medicine Hat* was to mark the end of an era. After that ill-fated voyage no serious attempt was ever again made at steamboat navigation on the Saskatchewan River. But by now, railroads had emerged as swifter, more reliable modes of transportation.

There were some who said river navigation was doomed from the beginning. The fact that two out of three voyages on the unpredictable Saskatchewan were tales of tribulation and disaster would seem to substantiate that. But for most, it was a chance worth taking. If successful, a steamboat one month out of Winnipeg could bring as much freight to Edmonton as a train of 150 to 200 ox carts could move across the plains in an entire summer.

The *Edmonton Bulletin* of November 5, 1881, summed it up this way: "The Saskatchewan is considered by some not to be fit for navigation but it must be very hard indeed if it is no better than slowgoing oxen on a muddy road 1,000 miles long."



BLUE-COATED MOUNTIES

The Alberta Provincial Police

For 15 years Alberta had its own "Mounties" in blue. Under the able direction of Supt. W.C. Bryan, the Alberta Provincial Police gave Alberta the reputation of being the province where gangsters, thieves and murderers came to be arrested.

MOST Albertans tend to think of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) as Alberta's police force, for they were here long before Alberta became a province and are still here, doing a tremendous job. But for 15 years Alberta had its own "Mounties," and a topnotch force it was too. Moreover, when the Alberta Provincial Police (APP) began enforcing the laws of the province, they actually took on more duties than the Royal North West Mounted Police (RNWMP) ever had. Besides general police work, the APP were responsible for bringing in any isolated homesteader to the nearest hospital should he fall ill; they were responsible not only for escorting the insane to the various institutions, but also for administering their estate after hospitalization. The APP was also responsible for the administering of the Mothers' Pension Act, seeing that women who were widowed or deserted by their husbands received a pension to feed their hungry children. The force was likewise given the job of distributing relief.

Those were only a few of their extra duties. The APP also inspected theatres in towns that had no police force of their own; likewise poolrooms and cafes, to see that all were operating according to Alberta law. They acted as brand inspectors and watched for diseases in cattle; they were required to collect unpaid bills from country patients who had used city hospitals. The APP investigated cases for the Workmens' Compensation Board; they acted as game wardens and fishery guardians, and they assisted the forestry department in enforcing forest fire regulations as well as rounding up fire-fighters when forest fires started. They were also required to report attendance at country schools to enable school boards to collect grants from the provincial government. Then there was the job of attending cattle roundups to supervise the distribution of branded animals and see that monies accrued from the sale of unbranded animals went to the rightful owners. Still another extra-curricular duty was to help Indian agents with their work whenever the need arose.

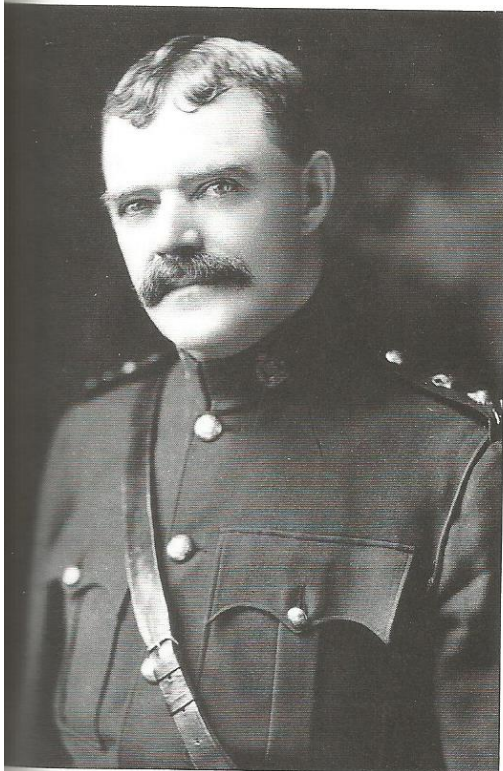
Finally, of course, there was the regular police work of maintaining law and order. This included highway patrol work, criminal investigation, as well as the biggest job of all, particularly during the years when prohibition was in effect, keeping the bootleggers in check. An article that appeared in the *Edmonton Journal* on December 10, 1928, gives a good example of how efficient the APP became at apprehending rum-runners through constant practice. It states:

"This year Christmas will not be what it used to be in Montana and adjacent states. Inhabitants of these sections long accustomed to having Santa Claus and imported Yuletide spirits from Alberta at Christmas will have Santa Claus but they won't get their Yuletide spirits.

(Right) Comm. Willoughby C. Bryan (1865-1947), of the Alberta Provincial Police.

(Below) The Alberta Provincial Police at their closing out ceremonies in March, 1932.





"Monday morning as part of the relentless war the Alberta Provincial Police have declared on rum-runners, three private cars loaded to their tops with Christmas cheer in bottles, were seized at Blairmore by the APP. . . . The drivers of the cars were arrested for illegal possession of liquor under the Alberta Liquor Act. . . . The cars captured were making their way to Montana at top speed through the Crowsnest Pass from British Columbia.

"For some time the APP has been steadily plugging the holes along the border through which liquor has been trickling into the land of the 'Parched Eagle' despite heart rendering wails from bone-dry throats.

"So acute had the situation become due to prohibition in the United States that rum-runners are offering princely bribes to any policeman who will take a beauty sleep while they roar through his territory. One APP constable from Edmonton who was sent into the southern part of the province recently claims he was offered \$3,000 to change the name on the charge laid against one rum-runner who apparently had a previous conviction against him.

"With bars down against the contraband runners, Americans are becoming desperate. Prices of Canadian liquor are soaring to unheard of heights. . . ."

Despite being offered great bribes simply to turn their backs, there were few if any incidents where members of the APP accepted. Though ill-equipped and badly organized when the force assumed its duties in 1917, the APP soon became as efficient as the force they succeeded, the RNWMP, who were reorganized and renamed the RCMP in 1920. The new force should have been as efficient, for 85 percent of its members were former members of the federal force. Though many Albertans were opposed to the idea of a provincial police force and voted against it, they had little choice in the matter.



With the First World War raging, the ranks of the RNWMP had been badly depleted by enlistments into the armed forces. Those who remained had their hands full looking after the internal security of the country. Consequently, in 1916 the federal government told both Alberta and Saskatchewan that the Mounties could no longer handle the policing of the two provinces and that they would have to form their own police forces. The Alberta government asked Maj. A.E.C. McDonnell, a former member of the RNWMP, to form a new force and act as its first superintendent.

The new force officially went to work on March 1, 1917. The APP took over with little training, though this was no serious drawback since most of its members had served, some for many years, with the RNWMP. What was a serious drawback, however, was the lack of adequate equipment. The APP had only three cars, Model T. Fords, at the start and a serious shortage of horses, uniforms and other equipment. At first the uniforms were cast-offs from city police forces, which badly angered the members of the new force who had been former Mounties. That problem was solved by adopting a uniform quite similar to that worn by the RNWMP, the tunic being blue rather than the Mounties' familiar red. But the theory advanced by some members of the Alberta Legislature prior to the takeover, that a provincial force would be cheaper to maintain, was soon shot down in flames. For, while the province had paid \$75,000 per year for the RNWMP, the annual cost of the APP soon rose to over a half a million dollars.

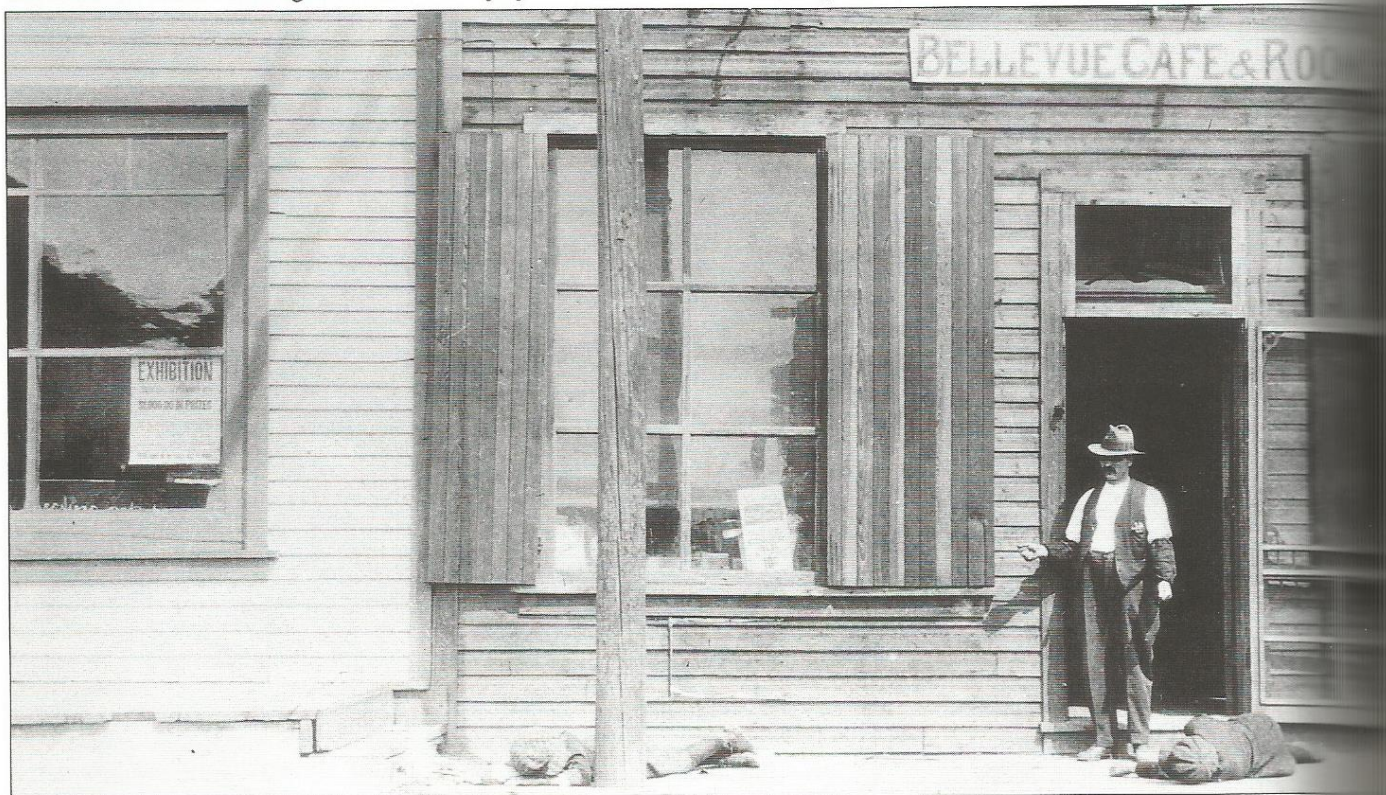
It would be false to claim that the APP was an immediate success. In its first year of service, of the 216 origi-

nal members, there were 66 resignations. Fourteen were dismissed for various reasons such as being unsuitable (three); disgraceful and immoral conduct (five); making a false statement (one); for allowing a prisoner to escape (one); for mutinous conduct (one); for taking part in a civil action (one); and for being absent without leave (one). By the end of the first year the force was down to 139 men and Major McDonnell had resigned. Lieut.-Col. W.C. Bryan, also a former Mounted Policeman, took over as superintendent, later changed to commissioner. Under him, the force was soon organized to a high state of efficiency.

Headquarters for the new force was Edmonton, which also served as the home of "A" Division. "B" Division had its headquarters at Red Deer, "C" at Calgary, and "D" at Lethbridge. There was also "E1" at Peace River and "E2" at Grande Prairie. Initially the force had 48 detachments stationed throughout the province. It gradually expanded to 100. It also had a Criminal Investigation Branch, composed of specially trained men under Insp. K. Duncan, ready to go anywhere in the province to assist in tracking down criminals. They did a masterful job for, throughout its lifetime, the force maintained an 80 percent conviction ratio. Some of the force's top-notch men were Insp. E.W. Bavin, Insp. J.D. "Blood Hound" Nicholson, Senior Inspector, later Assistant Commissioner, W.F.W. Hancock and many others.

According to the annual report submitted by Inspector Bavin in 1930, when he was in charge of the Calgary Division, of 2,954 arrests his men made that year, he had 2,492 convictions, with 19 still awaiting trial, for a conviction ratio of 89.9 percent. That meant that of every

Re-enactment of the shooting of Constable Batly by Tom Bassoff at Bellevue, August, 1920.



10 arrested, nine were convicted. "And in many cases," stated the report "the one in 10 was allowed to escape APP jurisdiction only because some other force in another part of Canada or the U.S. had already arrested the man." It led to a saying among gangsters, thieves and murderers who had operated for years in other parts of the country, that they had to come to Alberta to be arrested. The APP's record was an honourable one, admired around the world — that is, by everyone but the criminals.

Two of the APP's more notable cases were the Basoff, Arkoff, Auloff train robbery and the Union Bank robbery at Foremost.

The Basoff, Arkoff, Auloff case began on August 2, 1920, when Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) train No. 63 was on its way from Lethbridge to Cranbrook, British Columbia. As the train neared Sentinel way station in the Crowsnest Pass, Conductor Sam Jones was taking tickets when, suddenly, a man stood up and pointed a handgun at his head. Jones, perhaps foolishly, ignored the threatening gun and reached for the emergency cord, bringing the train to a screeching halt. Thrown off balance by the lurching stop, the bandit fired, but fortunately missed Conductor Jones. Just as the train ground to a stop, two more men jumped up and began waving guns and warning the passengers to stay in their seats. It took them only a few minutes to relieve the men of money and watches, though the women were simply ignored. There is a rumour that Emilio Picariello, the Crowsnest Pass' famous Mr. Pick, Bootlegger and Bottle King, was carrying \$10,000 that day, but somehow managed to slip it under a seat and escape detection. As it was, the bandits got away with \$400 in cash and several watches. It was one of those watches, the one belonging to Conductor Jones, that eventually led to the arrest of one of the men. As the train robbers stepped from the train, they fired another shot to keep everyone inside, then disappeared in the direction of Coleman.

From descriptions given by the passengers, the three hold-up men were identified as Frank Allen, alias George Arkoff; Jimmy Attin, alias Tom Basoff; and Alex Godzees, alias Ausby Hollof (alias Auloff). The combined police forces of the APP, RCMP and CPR soon had a manhunt underway. But the robbers seemed in no rush to get away as, four days later, they were seen in the village of Coleman. There they apparently split up, Auloff heading west and eventually into the United States, while Basoff and Arkoff went east, finally showing up in Bellevue on the morning of August 7, where they read about themselves on a "Wanted" poster displayed in the window of Justice of Peace J.H. Robertson's office. Then they casually sauntered into the Bellevue Cafe for breakfast. Perhaps they would not have been so nonchalant had they known that Mr. Robertson had recognized them as they stood reading the poster and quickly phoned Const. James Frewin of the APP at Blairmore. Constable Frewin soon contacted Const. F.W.E. Bailey of the APP and Corp. Ernest Usher of the RCMP and all three climbed aboard a passing CPR train for the short run to Bellevue.

Accounts differ as to what actually happened when the police reached the Bellevue Cafe, but one story has

Constable Bailey guarding the back door while Corporal Usher and Constable Frewin entered the front. Frewin, states the one version, stepped up to the men who were sitting in a booth behind drawn curtains, drew his gun and told them they were under arrest. Since Frewin was wearing civilian clothes, perhaps the two train robbers did not know he was a policeman. In any event, they both went for their guns and all hell broke loose in the Bellevue Cafe.

According to an article in the Glenbow-Alberta Institute files, publication unknown, but written by Dan E.C. Campbell in 1931: "Frewin, telling the men they were under arrest, ordered them to throw up their hands. They reached for their guns. Frewin fired at one of the men known as George Arkoff, wounding him. Usher held his fire until too late.

"Bailey, hearing the shooting, rushed in from the back. Frewin, having emptied his gun, backed out to make room for Bailey. Both Arkoff and his companion known as Basoff, had opened fire at Usher and Bailey, the former with a heavy Mauser and Basoff with two guns of the same make.

"Usher, shot in the back as he passed sideways through the front door to the street, fell and Bailey, stumbling over his body, struck his head on the pavement and lay stunned. Arkoff and Basoff, working their way along the wall, reached the door about this time. The former plunged through the door and fell to the street, dead.

"Basoff, standing in the doorway, a gun in each hand, saw Bailey move and shot him in the head, killing him instantly. He then fired a succession of shots into Usher's body and, though badly wounded in the leg, made his get-away. Frewin, badly shellshocked during the (First World War), did not recover himself until Basoff was out of range. There, in less time than it takes to tell about it, two policemen, both of different forces, and one bandit had lost their lives."

The country in the Crowsnest Pass area is hardly conducive to an easy manhunt. Nevertheless, the APP, led by famed Det. Insp. J.D. Nicholson, and the RCMP under Insp. J. McDonald, were determined that Basoff would not get away. However, he eluded pursuit until August 11, four days after the shooting. That night he was seen by a CPR engineer just west of the Pincher Creek station. The engineer poured on full steam and roared into Lundbeck, where he notified company police. Four CPR policemen jumped aboard the locomotive and were hustled back to Pincher Creek where they found Basoff hiding behind a shed near the station. It was all over. Basoff, weakened by loss of blood, hunger and little sleep, put up no resistance. The CPR police swarmed over him, handcuffed him and took him to Inspector Nicholson. On December 22, 1920, after a trial at Lethbridge, Tom Basoff died on the gallows for his crimes.

This left two down and one to go. In the meantime, descriptions of Ausby Auloff had been sent all over the United States and Canada. But it was not until four years later, on January 18, 1924, that Auloff made his first serious mistake by hocking Sam Jones's watch in a pawnshop in Portland, Oregon. According to Dan Campbell:

"Auloff was subsequently tracked to earth in a mine in Butte, Montana. He was later sentenced to seven years in the Prince Albert Penitentiary, where he was lodged just 10 days after word of the pawned watch had been received from Portland."

Another crime that received front page coverage on almost every newspaper in the Northwestern States and Western Canada was the August 29, 1922, robbery of the Union Bank at Foremost, Alberta. Insp. E.W. Bavin who later became the commander of Calgary's "C" Division, was in charge of that case. Not only did he and his men solve it, but in so doing they helped recover \$860,000 in bonds and securities and helped break up what was probably the best organized bank robbery network ever to operate on the North American continent.

Apparently there were five gangs all told, working out of Shelby and Havre in Montana and Minot, North Dakota, but organized from a headquarters in Chicago. They had pulled off so many bank hold-ups that clerks in both Canadian and American banks were holding lotteries on the chances of their banks being hit.

After the Foremost job, Inspector Bavin headed for Montana where, with the help of the Montana Police, he apprehended two men named Reid and Wilson. Both were identified by the clerks at the Foremost bank. Under a barrage of questions, Reid finally confessed to his participation in the robbery and agreed to help locate the stolen money, securities and bonds taken not only from Foremost, but from Ladner, B.C., Dollard, Saskatchewan and Mathers, Manitoba as well. Some of the loot was recovered from various hiding spots, the biggest amount being hidden in Stanley Park in Vancouver. It totalled \$860,000 and for his help Reid received a suspended sentence. Wilson was not as lucky — he spent the next nine years behind bars.

The rest of the bank robbers were soon rounded up by American authorities in various towns and cities. Since they were all sentenced to terms in the United States, Canadian police did not bother to press further charges. They considered that justice was served and being paid for by American rather than Canadian citizens.

Ben Shantz, long-time constable with the APP, when interviewed in 1939 by Clifford Awcock of the *Calgary Herald*, claimed that Rocky Mountain House was once one of Alberta's toughest towns. The reason for its toughness was the fact that, in the early 1920s, it was the supply centre for dozens of logging camps. "From 1,500 to 2,000 men were employed within a radius of 25 miles and they depended on Rocky to show them a good time, especially on Saturday nights and payday," wrote Awcock.

Constable Shantz, who retired from the force in 1939 to farm near Rocky Mountain House, told of serving from 1922 until 1926 in that town. "Rocky was tough in those days," he said. "I prosecuted as many as 50 cases a month when I first took over — mostly liquor charges. All liquor going to Nordegg had to go up on the train as there was no road then. Of course, there wasn't supposed to be any booze going in as Alberta was dry till 1923. The first day I was in town I nailed two fellows with suitcases loaded. They were easily spotted. A suitcase loaded with liquor is as heavy as lead, so spotting the fellows carrying them wasn't really that hard.

"We seized bottles in trunks and baggage, too. One man even used to send his daughter up to Nordegg on the train to carry the stuff in her baggage. Next day or so he would follow her in and peddle the booze."

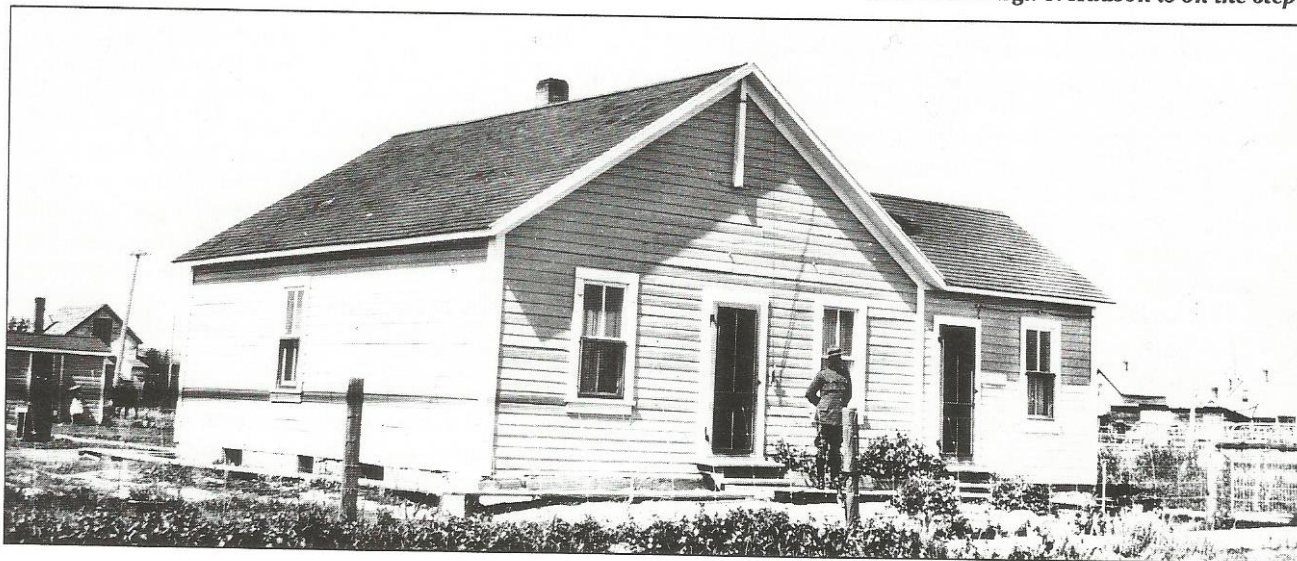
Much of the liquor being sold was moonshine made in local stills. Shantz claimed that he managed to slow the trade down but never did stop it altogether. "There was just too much profit in it," he claimed.

Besides trying to curtail the illicit liquor trade, Constable Shantz's life was kept busy investigating the many hunting and logging accidents as well as the occasional suicide. He acted as coroner and assisted doctors with autopsies. For a time he even served as the truant officer for the Rocky schools.

Shantz told of a bizarre incident when he accompanied a doctor to a logging camp near Horburg to investi-

(Opposite page) Cpl. R. Vice at Empress Detachment of Alberta Provincial Police, 1919.

(Below) The Alberta Provincial Police Detachment at Claresholm. Sgt. T. Hudson is on the step.



gate the case of a logger having been killed by a falling tree. By the time he and the doctor arrived, the body was frozen stiff. However, he and the doctor assured themselves the man had been killed by the tree, then loaded the body in the rear seat of the police car and started for town.

"That was quite a trip," he remembered. "He was frozen with his arms outstretched, so we set him on the seat in a natural position and tied a rope around him. I was nervous as a cat with that fellow riding behind us. We had to drive across the railway bridge as the ferry was out due to drifting ice. About halfway across a hand fell on my shoulder. It was only the Doc, but it startled me so I nearly drove off the bridge."

Shantz told of apprehending a murderer who was accused of murdering a man named Faulkner at Sylvan Lake in 1924. "I was washing my car about 10 o'clock in the morning when a call came saying the suspect was believed headed west toward Rocky. I jumped in the car and drove to Eckville — made good time, too, though the roads were none too good in those days. In Eckville I went into the telephone office to see if I could find out how the hunt was organized, but got no information. When I came out I looked east along the tracks and saw a fellow acting very queerly. He walked the tracks away, then got down and walked in the ditch. He climbed the fence and went away from the tracks then came back to the fence and finally disappeared under the big railway trestle.

"I started down the railway and when he saw me he ran south into the willows along the river. He certainly led me a merry chase, but when I caught sight of him and fired a shot over his head, he stopped and waited for me with hands up. It didn't take any smart detective work to know he was the bird we were after. His hands and clothes were covered with dried blood. He still wore the knife in his belt and carried a .22 rifle taken down and wrapped in a bundle. When I started to take the knife, he landed a hearty kick on my shins. I returned the compliment and roughed him up a little, after which he came along peacefully."

After legal liquor stores were opened in 1923 and the lumber industry began to decline, Rocky lost its toughness, Shantz said. "Those were good days for business, but mighty busy ones for the police."

Most other detachments of the APP were busy right up to April 1, 1932, when the RCMP resumed the policing of the province. By then the APP was under its third leader, Acting Comm. W.F.W. Hancock, who took over when Comm. W.C. Bryan resigned in February, 1932.

Perhaps an article that appeared in the *Calgary Albertan* on April 1, 1932, told the story of the demise of

the APP as well as any. It stated: "The Mounties have taken over. Thursday at midnight the Alberta Provincial Police as such ceased to exist. Henceforth the policing of Alberta will be done by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, a force which will incorporate into its ranks the majority of the men who made the Alberta Provincial Police known throughout the continent as one of the most proficient police organizations ever formed.

"As is a way with policemen, there was little outward sign of excitement as the last hours of the provincial police came near. But many of the men throughout Alberta could not help but feel sadness, as they had served with the force since its formation and had given 15 years of faithful service. They had built up a reputation for law enforcement unsurpassed by any force in the world. They had gained the respect of the citizens of Alberta as fair men and they had followed the hard and dangerous path of duty without fail.

"At midnight in police barracks and quarters throughout the province, the members of the APP automatically became members of the RCMP. To many of them the scarlet tunic of the Dominion force is familiar, for they served with the Mounties before the formation of the provincial police.

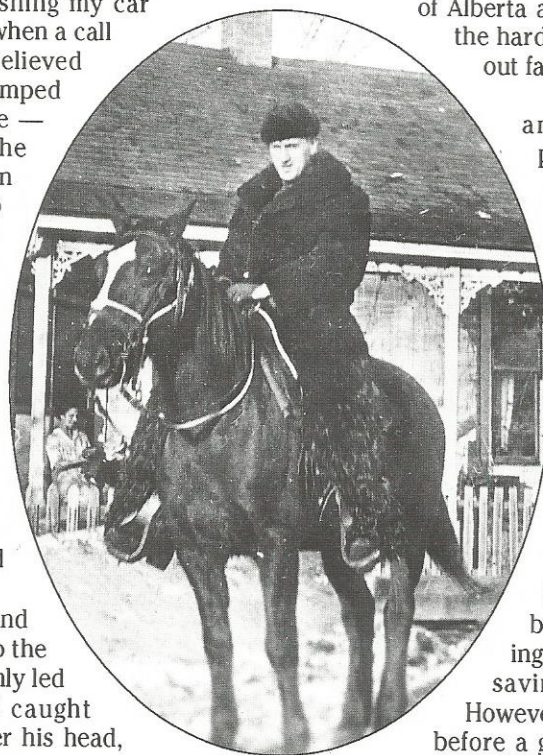
"Manitoba, Alberta, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick — all came under the jurisdiction of the Mounties on April 1."

It was simply a matter of economics. Of course the Mounted Police were now seeking a wider role for themselves, but the deciding factor in their taking over in Alberta was an estimated saving to the province of \$250,000.

However, the change did not take place before a great deal of debate. It was D.M.

Duggan, Conservative party leader, who first proposed the changeover in the 1930 session of the Alberta Legislature and estimated the saving that would come from it. Att.-Gen. J.F. Lymburn claimed that no such saving would result. Still others wanted the change as they felt the RCMP was the superior force, although that claim does not seem to be substantiated in light of the APP's incredible record. Labour groups, on the other hand, did not like the Mounties and feared their take-over.

Finally, however, money decided the issue. It was decided there would be a saving by utilizing the federal force and on April 1, 1932, the RCMP took over. Since the men of the APP became Mounties and since the uniforms of the APP had not been too different from those of the RCMP, it is doubtful if the casual observer even noticed the change. One thing did not change — Alberta retained the same high standard of law enforcement it had known since the Mounties first arrived in 1874.



*(Right) The spectacular beauty of Monkman Provincial Park in B.C. showing the Pioneer Mountains with Monkman Lake in the centre.
(Inset) Trailblazer Alex Monkman on his saddle horse, Tramp.*

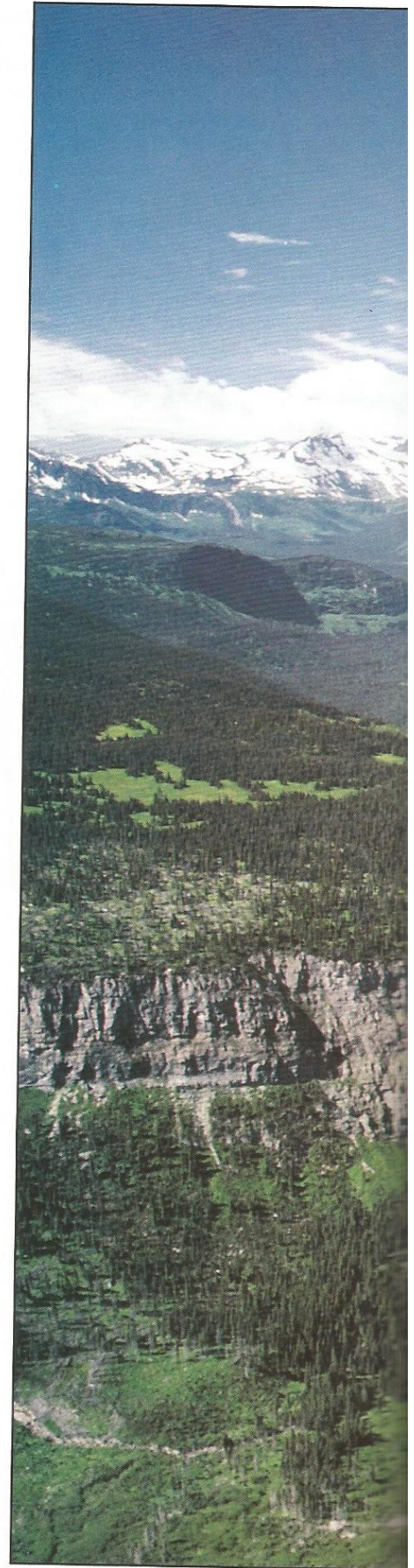
ALEX MONKMAN'S DREAM

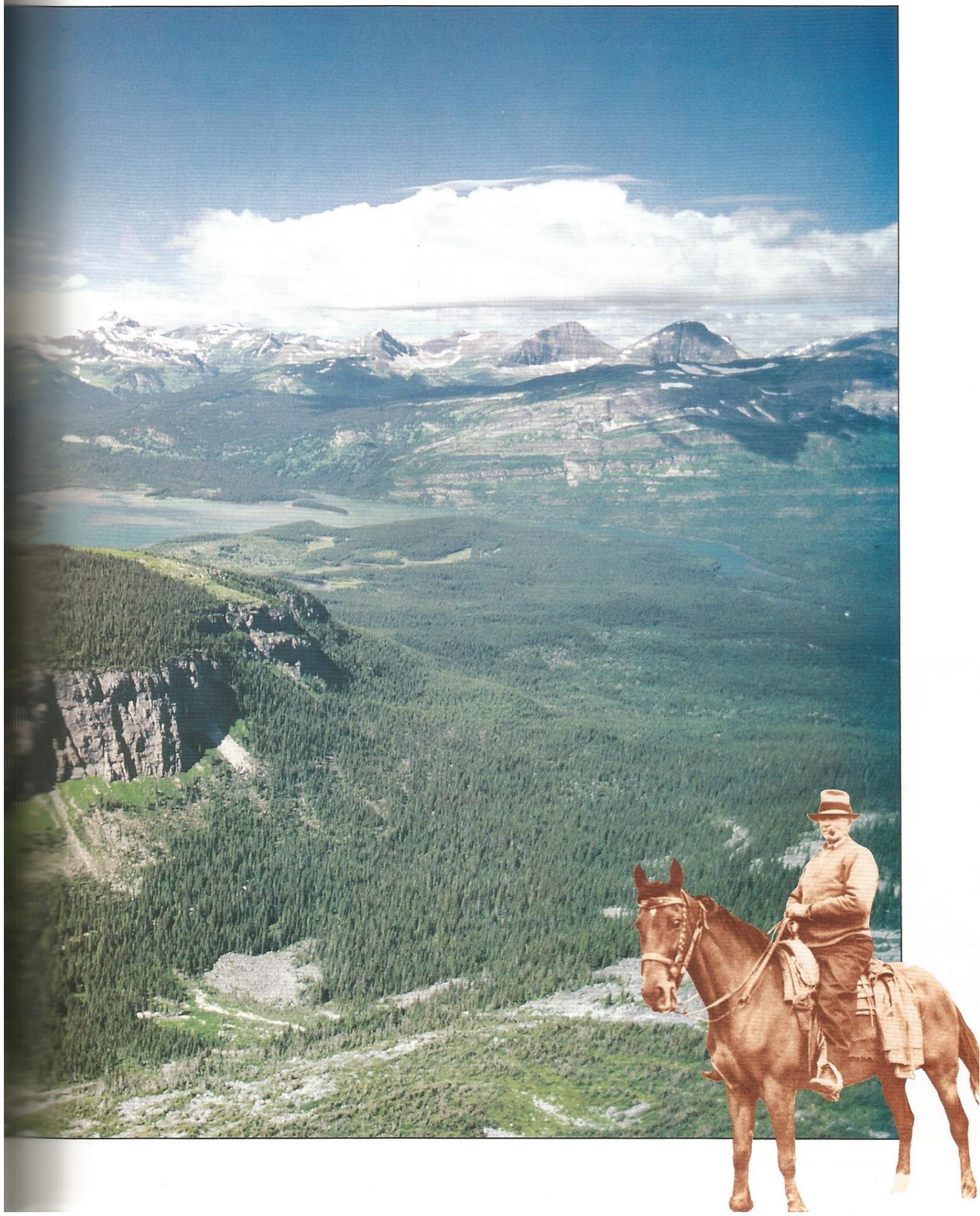
A British Columbia Provincial Park, a mountain pass, a lake and a creek are named in his honour: if things had gone as planned, there would also be a highway bearing his name. For, during the 1930s, Monkman discovered a low pass through the Rocky Mountains. Then, when the people of Alberta's Peace River country got only promises of a rail-road and highway that never materialized, Monkman inspired them to tackle the project themselves.

ALEX MONKMAN was born in the Red River Valley near Winnipeg in 1870. Four years later he moved with his parents to Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, where his father did a little farming. His father also hunted buffalo every year until 1881, the year they virtually vanished from the plains. Though young at the time, the memory of living in a buffalo skin tent while his father hunted buffalo would remain with Alex the rest of his life. In 1886, at the tender age of 16, Monkman went to Montana where he earned \$75 a month breaking horses and riding the range.

"It was the Klondike gold rush that brought Monkman to the Peace River country," wrote Harold Fryer in *Alberta: The Pioneer Years*. "After working 11 years as a bronco-buster and miner in Montana, he drifted north to Edmonton, where he worked for lumberman John Walters, building and painting cutters and sleighs. Then, when the news of the gold strike in the Yukon turned the slow-growing town into a bustling gathering place for prospective gold miners from all over the United States and Canada, Monkman too caught the gold fever and joined the host of humanity heading north.

"In the spring of 1898 he started out with a party of five, led by a Scotsman named William Lang, driving nine Red River carts and a wagon and following the trail to Fort Assiniboine and over the Swan Hills to Willow Point on the west end of Lesser Slave Lake." By the time Monkman reached Dunvegan, he had heard enough disparaging reports about the impossibility of the trail to the Klondike, that he decided to turn back. But at Dunvegan, Monkman met his future brother-in-law, Albert Tate, the manager of the local





Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) post. Tate was in the process of moving the HBC post for Peace River to Lesser Slave Lake, and Monkman apparently helped him move to the new location.

Attracted by the Peace River country, Monkman decided to stay. He freighted for a man named Anderson for a month or so until he met W. Fletcher Bredin and James Cornwall at their trading post at Slave Lake. "Their enthusiasm for the country soon rubbed off on Monkman," wrote Fryer, "particularly after they put him to work running dogs and buying fur for them the following winter, then, the next summer, sent him to the Grande Prairie district to choose a site for the new post where the trail forked near Lake Saskatoon."

In July, 1900, while on one of his buying trips to Edmonton, Alex married Louisa Ann Tate and brought her back to Lake Saskatoon. Louisa was scarcely prepared for Alex's lifestyle, having been brought up in a young ladies academy, but she adjusted quickly. After making Alex's log shack a home, she was soon initiated into tending store, and even on occasion, buying furs.

According to Monkman, he was the "pioneer farmer" of the Grande Prairie, having farmed on a small scale while employed by Bredin and Cornwall as early as 1903. Monkman worked for Bredin and Cornwall until June 1, 1906. Then he took up ranching for awhile by buying a herd of cattle from Jimmy McCreight. Monkman built up the herd to perhaps 150 horses and cows, but finally had to give up ranching when homesteaders began filing in after 1908 and the amount of rangelands became restricted. He then concentrated on farming until 1920 when high freight rates and low grain prices forced some of the homesteaders to abandon their farms. Monkman then

tried his hand at trapping.

According to E.C. Stacey's book, *Monkman Pass Highway*, there were only nine trappers in the mountains southwest of Rio Grande (Alberta) in 1922. Of these, Monkman was the only one with enough supplies to last the entire winter. "When he reached the Herrick River he found a spike of the 1904 Grand Trunk survey and quickly realized he had found the easiest and lowest pass and the most direct route from the Peace region (to the Pacific Coast)."

On December 17, 1937, the *Grande Prairie Herald* printed a speech given by Monkman. In it Monkman describes how, during the summer of 1923, he returned to the area to mark the pass on a map, scrutinize the area for building materials, and to check distances. Bolstered with this data, Monkman went to Edmonton with his dream of a railroad. He talked to government officials and visited influential business men. As he spread his material before them, he pleaded his case for the great potential of the Peace River country, and the need for its farmers to have an outlet for their produce.

Monkman reminded the government that in 1900 they promised the first Peace River settlers that a railroad would be following them, practically on their heels. When that did not materialize, the government promised a railroad when 10,000,000 bushels of grain were ready for market. The very next year there were 24,000,000 bushels for sale, but still the government procrastinated.

Monkman also reported his findings to the Canadian Pacific (CPR) and Canadian National (CNR) railways. The CNR was interested enough to send reconnaissance engineer Murray Hill to assess the pass in 1933. Monkman outfitted a pack outfit and guided Hill through the pass. Hill was impressed by what he saw and his report was apparently positive, but there was still no one daring

The village of Lake Saskatoon, Alberta, in the early 1920s.



enough to finance the project.

Not willing to admit defeat, Monkman travelled the whole Peace River country at his own expense extolling the feasibility of the pass, and the advantages it would have for the people of the Peace. Monkman pointed out that the summit was only 1,200 feet higher than Grande Prairie. The whole route was only 132 miles and construction would be relatively easy. Monkman expounded on the great monetary gains being generated for Alberta from the sale of timber, oil, gas and sharp sand. He even talked of tourism, but best of all would be the cheaper freight rates.

Eventually, both the CPR and CNR engineers asked to examine Monkman's maps. They showed considerable interest, and questioned Monkman in depth; but once again nothing tangible came of it.

In 1936, as Monkman's neighbours sat around Art Smith's kitchen table, they became convinced that a highway would be more feasible than a railroad. That day they cemented their plans by agreeing to form an organization to be called the Monkman Pass Highway Association (MPHA). On October 26, 1936, a public meeting was held at Halcourt, Alberta, to elect an executive and a board of directors. The purpose of the association was "to build, or promote the building of, a highway through the Monkman Pass to Hansard, British Columbia, by interesting governments, and securing capital for such an undertaking."

Many of the organizers became the first officers and directors. They included Crosbie McNaught, president; John McNaught, secretary; Gordon Fawkes, campaign manager; Art Smith, publicity director, and Albert Smith, finance committee chairman.

Gordon Fawkes and Art Smith travelled the length and breadth of the Peace River country, speaking in town council chambers, schoolhouses and dance halls. Reg Leake, the local photographer, made a set of lantern slides which were shown at every meeting. The men were welcomed everywhere, garnering support for their cause.

Centres all across the Peace River country set up committees to build support. That winter, Vancouver, Prince George and the Peace River country of British Columbia formed their own branches of the association. When these efforts still failed to sway the government, a frustrated Crosbie McNaught told an Edmonton *Journal* reporter: "We're tired of being isolated and subjected to high trading costs because of our isolation. We are going to have a highway to the coast now! We are going to carry on with whatever help we can get!" This type of dedication and determination was prevalent throughout the entire region.

Between them, brothers Albert and Art Smith bore a heavy responsibility, since the collection of funds was directly related to the success of the publicity. Even though money was in short supply, food for men and animals was generously given. Someone would donate a steer, someone else a load of oats or the income from an acre of crop. Women sent the produce from their gardens, as well as butter, eggs, chickens and geese. Byer's Flour Mill of Camrose, Alberta, supplied flour and Sunny Boy porridge. Cases of canned milk came from Pacific

Milk, while Spicer's Bakery in Grande Prairie donated cases of bread and Swift's Canadian Meat provided cured and canned meats. Even local businesses contributed by discounting their grocery and hardware bills.

The project was scheduled to start in early June, 1937. On June 8 a 14-man crew, with two girls as cooks, assembled in the Rio Grande hall. Two wagons were loaded high with food, feed for horses, tents, axes, shovels, grub hoes and a slip for moving earth to fill in holes or cover their bridges. There was no heavy equipment or tractors; just two teams of horses, and manpower.

Everyone was excited now that the project was finally about to start. The MPHA officials were all there to see them off, but no one was more thrilled than Alex Monkman. On his horse Tramp, Monkman led the way for the first step into this great enterprise.

Within the first half-day journey, the two heavily-loaded wagons had travelled from a road to a trail. Where the trail ended, the construction commenced. While the two girls, Jean Mackie and Chrissie Monkman, and the camp attendant set up for lunch, the men eagerly went to work with axes. For the girls, getting meals for 16 people was no easy task, but they treated it as an adventure.

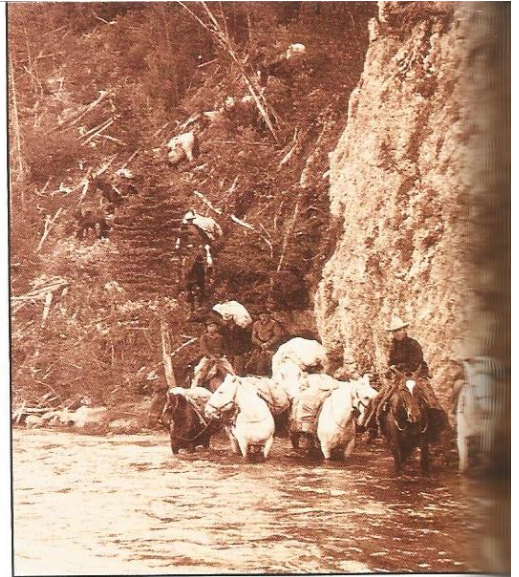
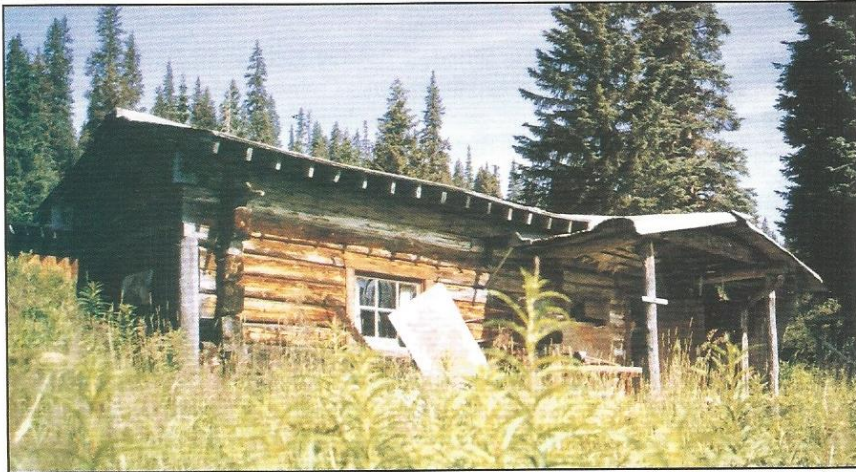
Dan Harris, a construction foreman, was the first road boss. Under his guidance the culverts and little bridges went in with great exactitude. Unfortunately, this very precision cost Harris his job. Monkman wanted a road pushed through as fast as possible. Harris, on the other hand, did not see the point in building a road that was not passable. They argued and bickered until the MPHA had to intervene. They agreed with Monkman and Harris was fired.

John A. Johnson took over for Harris until Hughie Doole of Lake Saskatoon could settle his affairs and assume the responsibilities for the remainder of the summer. Most of the workers were transient; offering their services free of charge for two week stints before being replaced with new volunteers. It was a big job coordinating a fresh supply of men coming in just as the others were leaving.

Throughout the month of June the MPHA hired Monkman, Dave Calliou and Guy Moore to survey and stake out the route to Stony Lake. Moore was a greenhorn as far as working in the bush was concerned, but he was willing to learn. After the three had finished their survey to Stony Lake, the MPHA hired Monkman to head up a crew of four men to proceed ahead of the road builders. Their goal was to blaze a trail from Stony Lake to Hansard, B.C., the final destination, where their highway was to meet the Yellowhead-Jasper Highway.

This second project was a much bigger task than the first, and Monkman, now 62 years old, needed strong young men with bush experience. He invited Carl Brooks, a big game guide and packer, and Ted Chambers, another bush-wise man, to accompany him. The fourth man was Shorty McGinnis, a wiry, sprightly chap who agreed to be the horse wrangler for their 11 horses. The four trail blazers were to be followed by another group, led by Alec Watt, who were to cut a good pack trail along the route.

Starting out at separate times, the two groups did



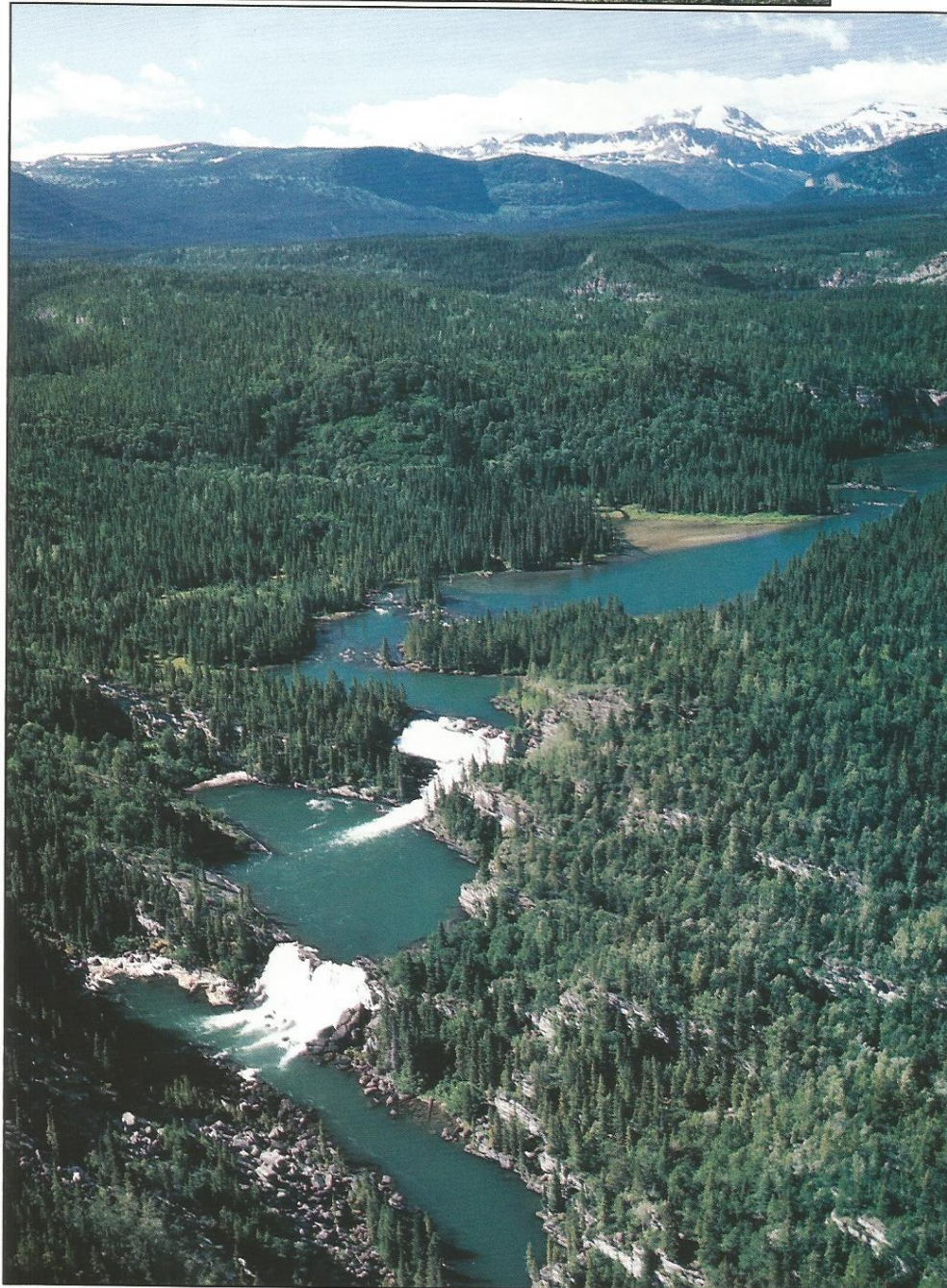
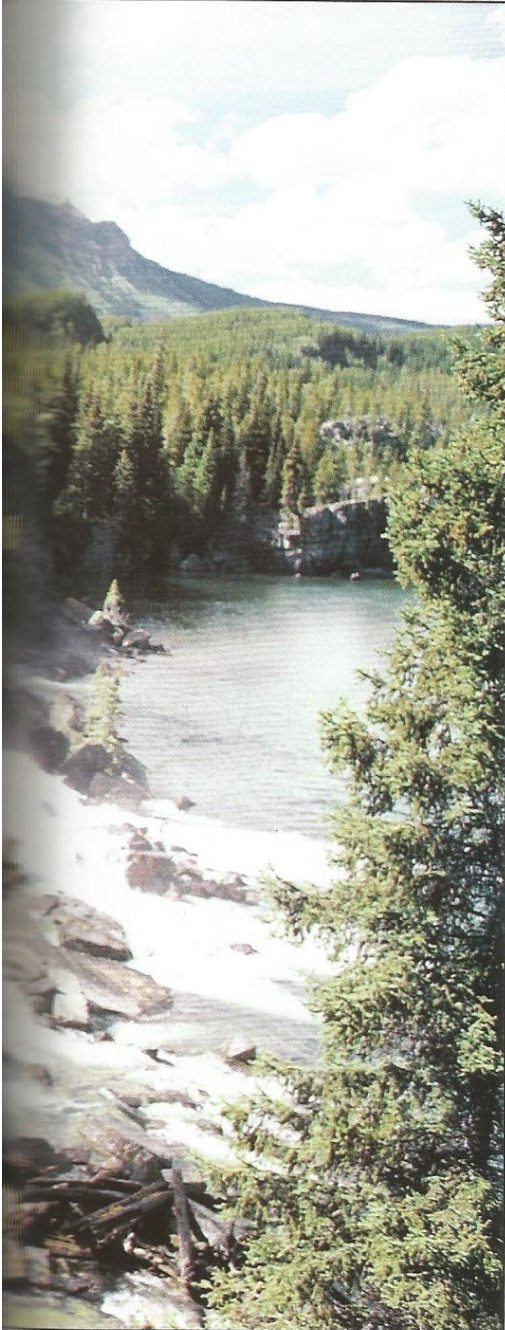
(Right) Horseback is still the best way to see Monkman Park.

(Bottom right) Another view of Monkman Park, showing two waterfalls on Monkman Creek.

(Opposite page, top left) Hobi's cabin in 1989. Still in excellent condition, the cabin is often used by trappers.

(Opposite page, top right) Ted Chambers and Carl Brooks detour around a high ridge between Kinuseo Falls and Monkman Lake.

(Below) A close up view of one of several Monkman Creek waterfalls.



not meet up until they were nearly at the Kinuseo River. Although both parties had planned their own food supplies, Monkman's crew appears to have been better prepared. Monkman had added an extra packhorse so they could take tinned beans, fruit and meats. This speeded up meal preparation time. Watt's crew had taken too much dried produce, which had to be soaked before cooking. They also included fat sow belly, of which the men soon tired. Bannock was a staple of both gangs.

Both parties were able to follow old Indian pack trails all the way to Hobi's cabin. There Watt's outfit, which had been out longer than they planned, and whose food was nearly gone, decided they would have to go back. Two of the men would continue on to Hansard on foot. By drawing straws, Watt and Alf Cunningham were selected to continue on, and, after saying their goodbyes, they started out with four days provisions, one blanket and one sheet of canvas. The rest returned to the main work camp.

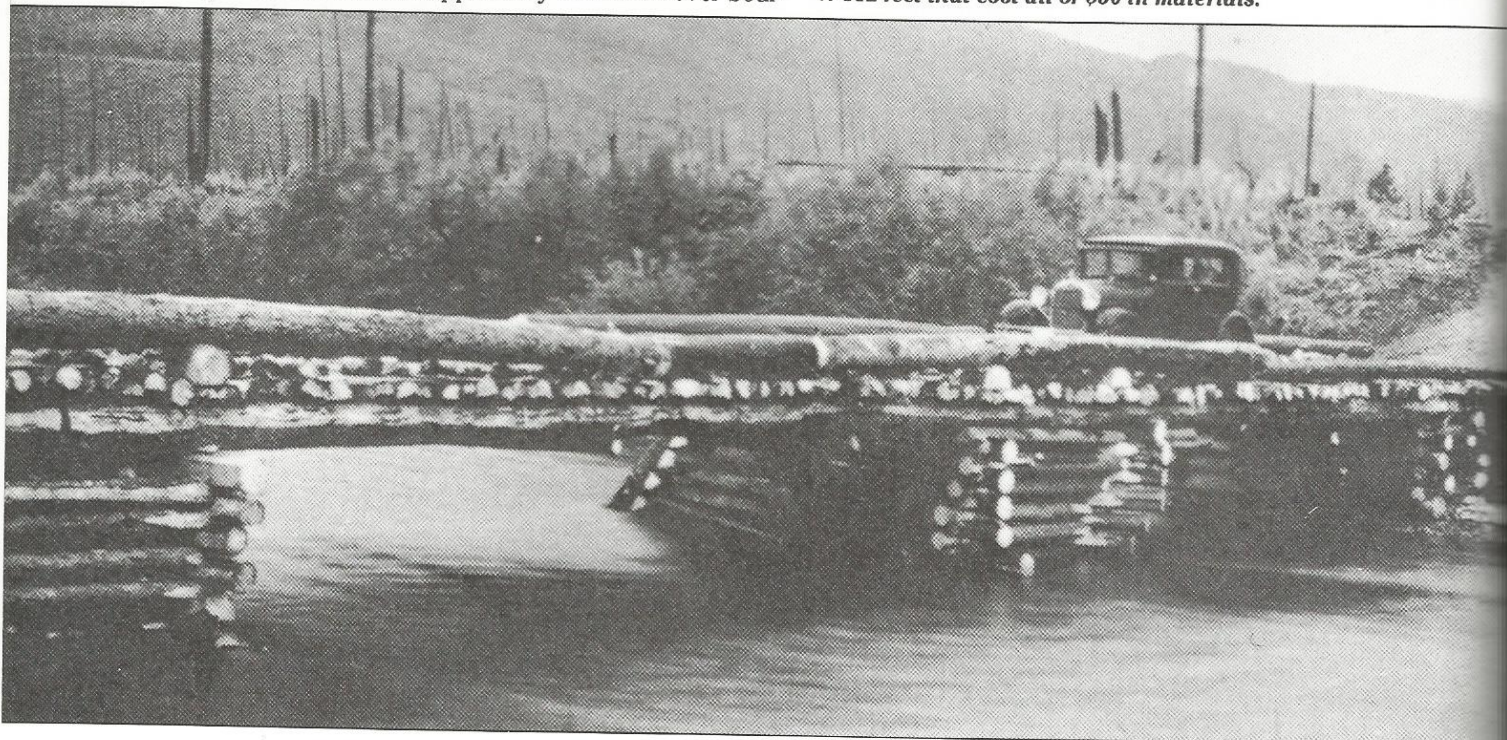
Monkman's crew were sorry to see them leave. Chambers, especially, wished they were returning with them. But they still had a job to do and 40 miles of terrain still to cover. No horse was known to have ever travelled their proposed route from the Herrick River to the McGregor River. It was a tough task that lay before them.

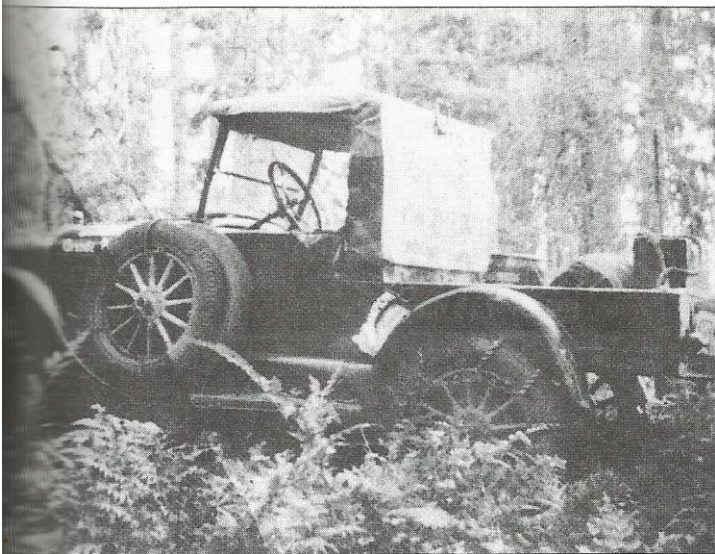
When Monkman and his men started this final leg of their journey, they were able to follow a trapper's trail for the first two hours. Then, in an effort to get their bearings, Chambers and Brooks climbed a nearby mountain which afforded an overall view of the surrounding country. This viewpoint revealed that their first concern would be to negotiate a nearby canyon to gain access to a meadow where there would be feed for their horses.

Chambers later wrote in his diary: "At one place we had to lead our horses along the side of the mountain for 200 yards. If the horses slipped they would roll over boul-



(Above) Constructing the Kinuseo Creek bridge in 1938.
(Below) The completed Kinuseo Creek bridge, with its span of 112 feet that cost all of \$50 in materials.





(Above) When the MPHA was promised financial aid by the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce if they could get a car over their roadway, Louis Stojan donated the 1927 Model-T Ford shown here. Sixty miles from its destination, the history-making Ford was abandoned upon the start of the war. In June of 1967, almost 30 years after, members of the Grande Prairie River Rats Assoc. hauled it out of the bush for restoration.

(Below) The first crew at Camp No. 2. Left-Right: Seated; Everett Nash, Herb Gitzel, Tiny Cunningham, Jean Mackie, Chrissie Monkman. Standing, left-right: Alex Monkman, Gary Moore, "Tarzan" Williams, Bill Laybourne, Slim Cunningham, Lorne Cunningham, Dan Harris, Jim Cameron and Ed Breitreutz.



ders right into the Herrick River. Then there was a big muskeg to cross. Horses would pick their way where shrubs grow. The ground would shake for 20 feet all around. Devil's Club and ferns grow taller than a man."

Night fell with the men still working their way through the muskeg. Unable to continue in the dark, they felled trees and laid poles across them. In this way they were able to spread their blankets above the wet ground.

Next morning Brooks and Chambers left the horses with McGinnis and Monkman and went scouting for a safer trail for the horses. This was found by building a piece of road around a mountain edge, which they worked on all morning, then went exploring.

Monkman had told them that a trapper named Martin Framstadt had a cabin at the end of the meadow. They found the trail easily enough, but did not know whether to go up or down. Chambers went down the trail and found Watt and Cunningham just ready to start down the Herrick River on a raft. In this manner they expected

to reach the Fraser River, and that would take them to Hansard. Chambers wished them luck and backtracked to find Framstadt's place.

Meanwhile, Brooks had gone up the trail and found an excited Framstadt at home. Watt had passed through and told him to expect visitors with horses. In the 17 years Framstadt had lived there, this was the first time he had ever seen horses in the area. An indication of why horses had never ventured into the area might be gleaned from Chambers' diary:

"If you have never travelled in the mountains with a train of horses," he wrote, "in a place where a horse has never been before, you have no idea of the hardships and dangers. I wouldn't want to think what would happen if someone broke their arm or leg. And all the time I was thinking, I have to come back this way to get my horses and outfit home. Only the thought of the \$7.50 a day for 11 horses and two men keeps me going. Never

(Opposite page) Monkman Park holds scenes of spectacular beauty. In this photo a waterfall is seen at the eastern edge of Paxton Pass.

(Right) One of numerous pristine creeks in Monkman Park.

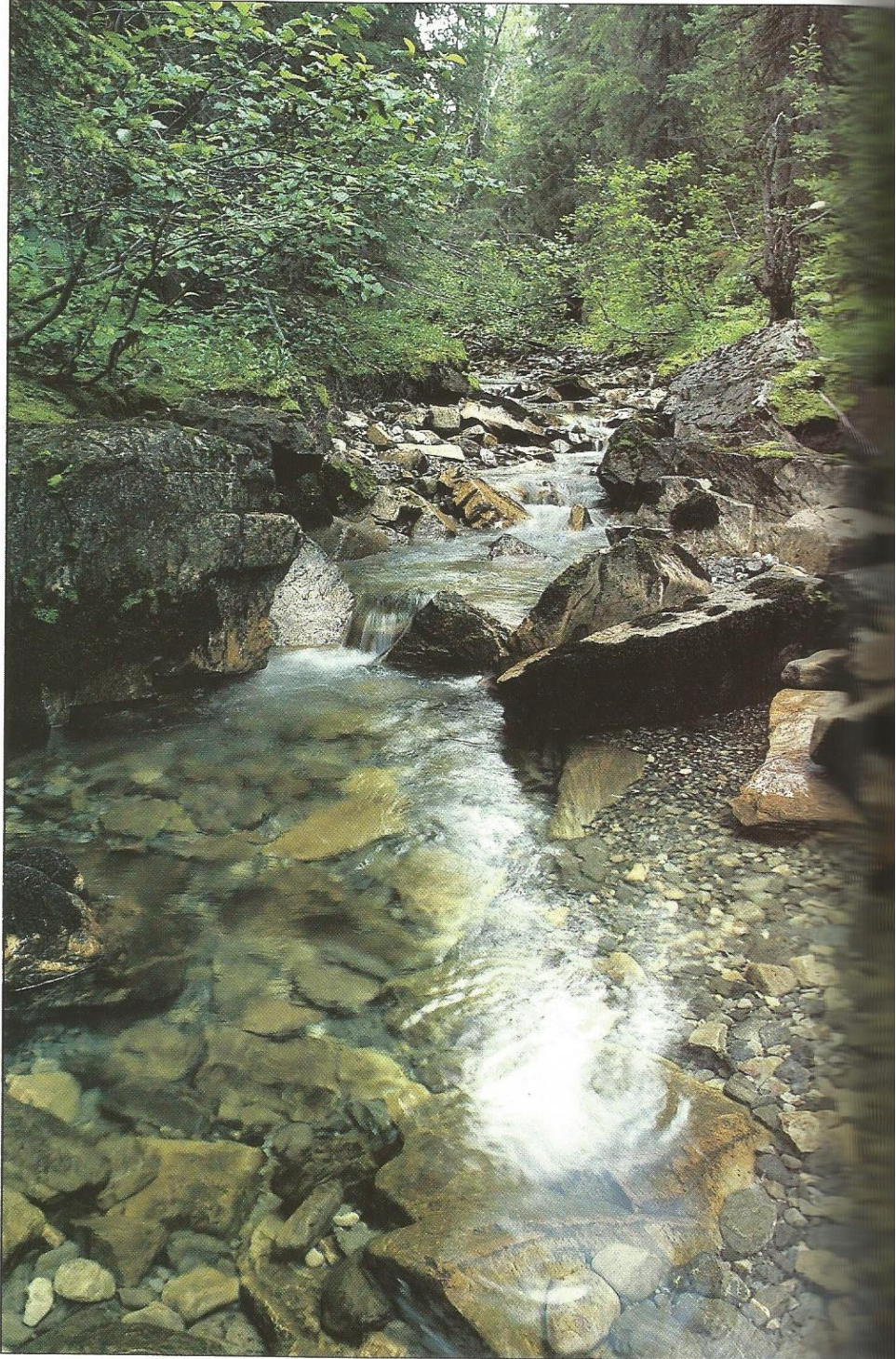
(Below) Alex Monkman at a work camp in 1937

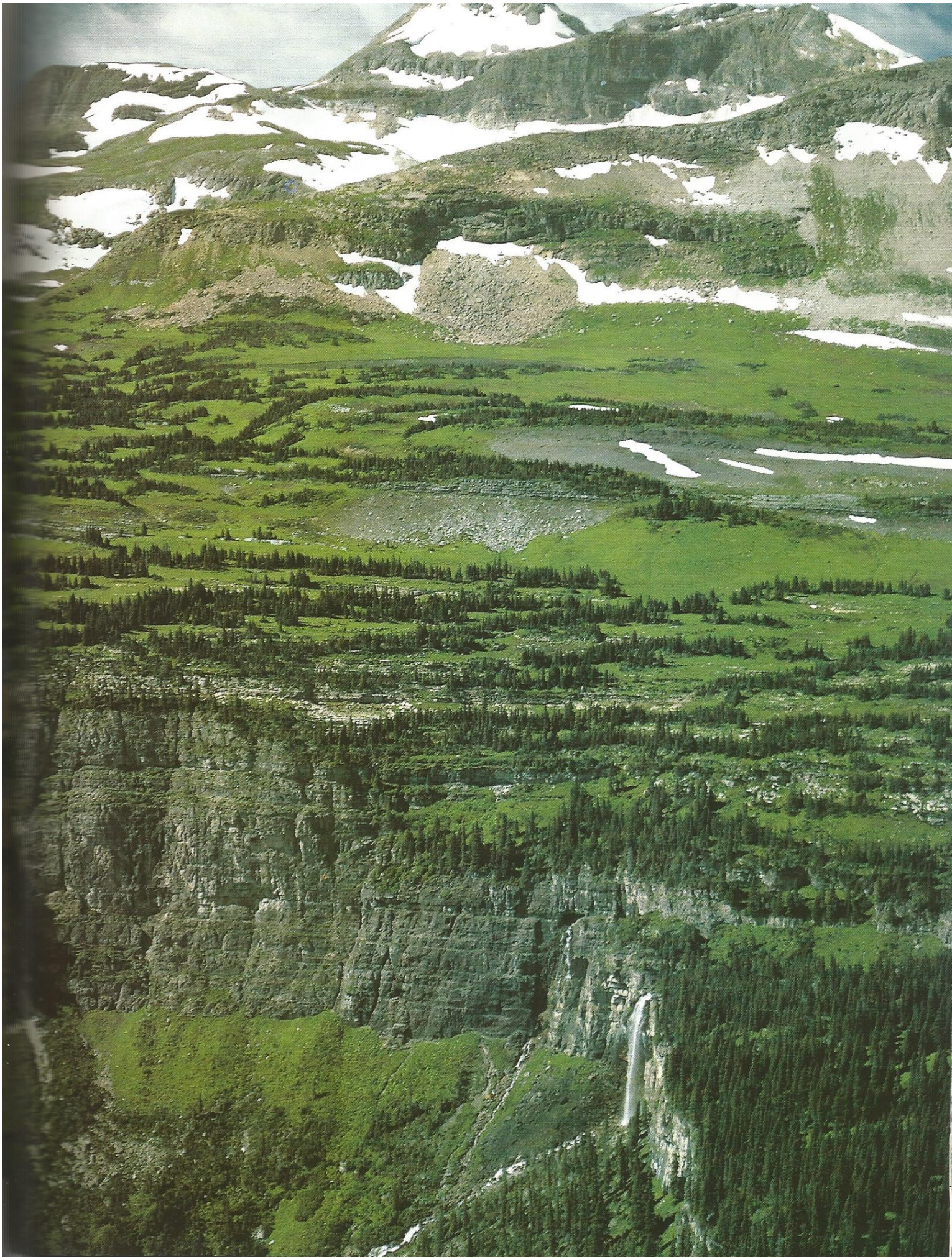


again will I make this trip."

But the hardships were temporarily forgotten as they were warmly welcomed by Framstadt and given the royal treatment. Framstadt entertained them with great stories. He showed them how to spear salmon, which, with potatoes from his garden, he cooked for them. He also made a wild goose stew which really delighted Monkman.

It rained for two days while they were there, and they were all glad for the opportunity to rest. The heavy rain swelled the river to dangerous levels, and they were





forced to wait for it to recede. When Framstadt deemed it safe for the horses to cross, the men left, accompanied by Framstadt. The next stop would be Dave Barr's cabin on the south side of the Salmon River.

The group encountered more problems trying to locate Barr's cabin. Afraid that if they all stayed together they might get lost, wander about, and waste a lot of time, it was decided that Chambers and Framstadt would take the boat down the Herrick River, then up the Little Salmon River to the cabin. They were then to work their way back to the pack train on foot. Chambers and Framstadt found the cabin without difficulty, then started out to meet the pack train as planned. But darkness overtook them, and, just as they were preparing to spend the night under a tree, they heard Monkman and his crew shouting. They were wandering around and headed in the wrong direction. Re-united, they all spent the night under the trees.

The next day they crossed the Herrick River (Big Salmon). It began to pour again while they were cutting a trail to the McGregor River. The river had risen three feet, and with heavy brush on the opposite bank, there was no place for the horses to land. It was decided that McGinnis would remain behind with the horses, some food and a rifle, while the rest took the boat across. They would continue the journey on foot.

Travelling was good on the game trails and they made it to one of Barr's empty line cabins where they spent the night. The next morning they came to the main cabin where they were greeted by the smell of fresh baked bread. After 25 days of bannock, nothing ever tasted so good. Barr also told them that he had cut a six-mile trail towards Hansard. They rested at Barr's cabin for the remainder of the day.

Leaving early in the morning, the group travelled as directly as possible through hemlock, swamp, coulees, and Devil's Club as high as their shoulders. Relying on their compass, they travelled south by southwest all afternoon. Monkman was very tired and had to be assisted over deadfalls all day. That night it rained again, and the only protection they had was a piece of tarp six-foot square. Each man had to decide whether to keep his head or his feet dry, as the small canvas could not do both. All were relieved when morning came. At noon, while they were making the last of their flour into bannock, they heard motor boats and a train. What a sound it was for the bone-weary men.

At four o'clock they reached the Jasper Highway, where highway workers were astonished to see dishevelled men with dirty whiskers emerging from the bush. Brooks later summarized the situation in his diary: "We have blazed a trail from the Peace River country to Hansard, through the finest game region and over the most scenic route imaginable — a fisherman's paradise — with only two steel bridges of any size (needed). And only two rock cuts on the side hills of any length (would be necessary). It doesn't seem possible till one has travelled the trail. We are sure glad to be through. None of us has felt tired for the last three or four days, but now we are through, we discover we are really tired and hungry. The road boss fixed us with dry clothes and invited us to

supper. I'm afraid the company lost money on that meal. Tonight we are taking the train to Prince George."

Chambers and Framstadt did not remain in Prince George long; they had to return to McGinnis and the horses. The Prince George Board of Trade gave them money for supplies to see them home. At Hansard they hired Ole Hanson, the river-man, to take them back up the river to where they left McGinnis. With his help, it was a far quicker and easier trip up than the one they had made coming down.

Monkman and Brooks remained in Prince George promoting the Monkman Pass Highway project. With the success of their trip behind them, they had satisfying answers for those who questioned the feasibility of a road through that unfriendly wilderness. Monkman felt his dream was one step closer to reality.

Unfortunately, the real work of constructing the road ceased in August, 1937, when the MPHA ran out of funds and needed time to recuperate. It was a sad crew that dragged itself back to Rio Grande. Monkman had hoped to be at the Murray River by September, but they had only reached Stony Lake, less than half that distance.

In 1938, due to the diligent work of the MPHA, work crews were again constructing the road. At one time as many as 60 men were employed. Monkman was there too, rejoicing in the enthusiasm and progress. Monkman took about 10 days off from the main road construction to assist the men from Dawson Creek, B.C., blaze a trail from Feller's Heights to a point near Stony Lake. This would connect the B.C. Block with the Monkman Pass Highway.

By the time Monkman returned, work crews were nearing Kinuseo Creek, where a bridge had to be built. The 112-foot wooden span had just been completed when workers received the shocking news that the MPHA was once again out of funds. Monkman was bitterly disappointed; he was also depressed and discouraged.

Others took up the challenge by trying to drive a light truck through to Hansard River before winter set in. Of the 14 men that started out under the leadership of Frank Murphy, some were fired, some quit, and others became ill. Three newcomers added along the way gave fresh impetus, but constant hunger, and working in wet clothes through rain and snow, had a demoralizing effect. It was a motley crew that reached Hobi's cabin on November 1, 1938, with a truck that was but a shadow of its former self.

"One more day and we would have been through," said Alec Watt. Unfortunately, they did not have one more day.

The attempt to drive a truck through did not lighten Monkman's sombre mood. Then in 1939 the war effort put a stop to all fund raising. That same year his beloved Louisa died. As the war raged on in Europe, Monkman's dream of seeing his highway completed, faded. In 1941 he died a lonely and tired man.

But Monkman has left his dream with the people of the Peace River country. The Monkman Pass Highway is still the best, shortest, and prettiest, way to connect the Peace River country to the coast. Alec Monkman, your dream lives on!

DISASTER AT THE HILLCREST MINE

The Crowsnest Pass area was no stranger to tragedy. But even the most pessimistic could not have anticipated the disaster of June 19, 1914, when an explosion in the Hillcrest mine snuffed out the lives of 189 men.

THE Crowsnest Pass region of southern Alberta is certainly no stranger to disaster. Coal mining districts seldom are. Few indeed are those living in the area who are not acutely aware that, on April 29, 1903, the whole face of Turtle Mountain — some 70,000,000 tons of it — came tumbling down, burying part of the village of Frank and killing 76 people. Seven years later, on

December 9, 1910, another 30 men lost their lives at Bellevue when an underground explosion devastated the mine.

Miners and their families everywhere are painfully aware that mining is dangerous — that at any time a miner's life can be snuffed out by a rockfall, explosion, or a runaway mine car. Those things happen and miners

The Hillcrest mine buildings shortly after the disaster. Note the collapsed roof of the pump house in the foreground.

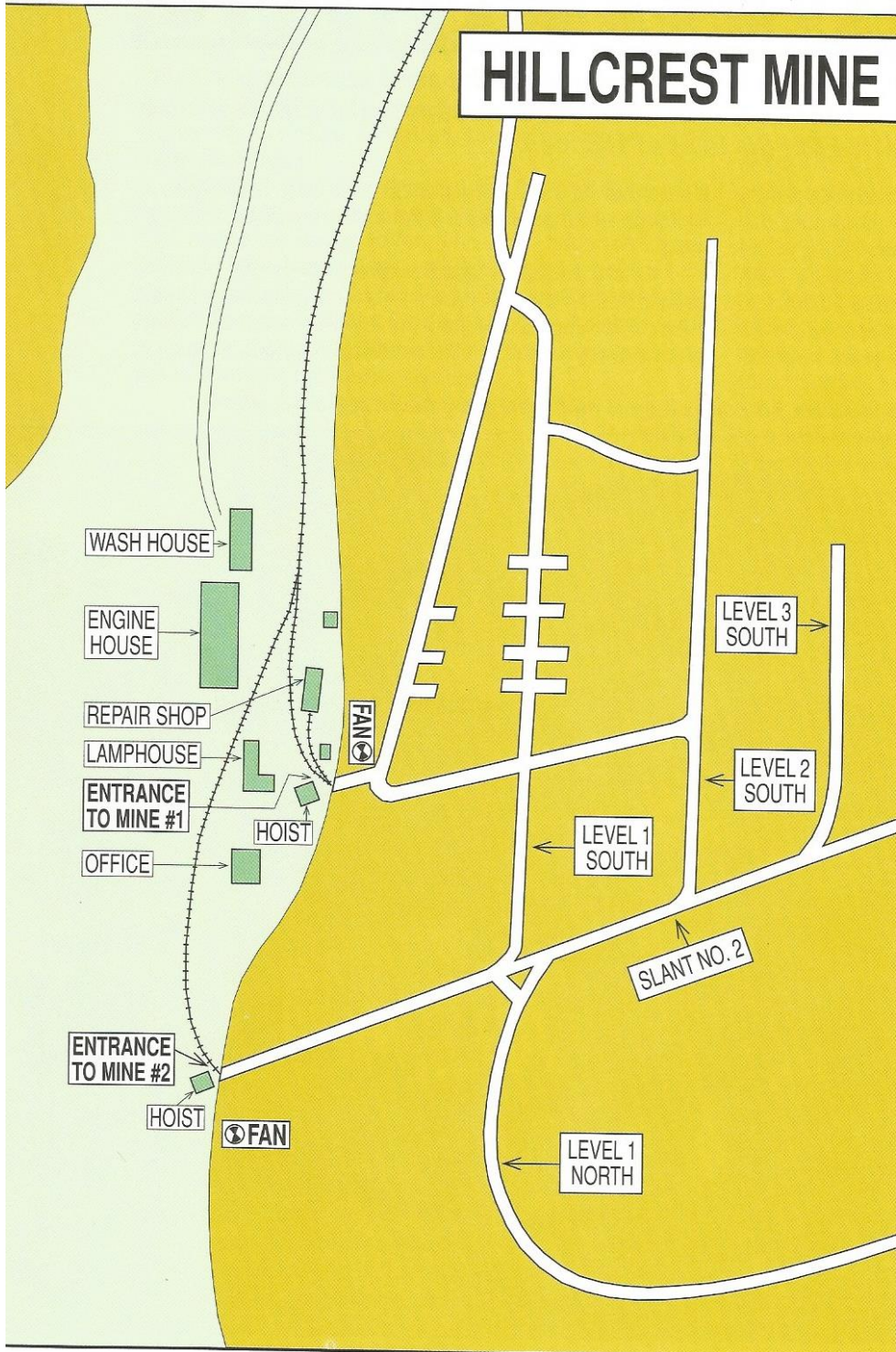


live, or die, with it. But even the most pessimistic could hardly have anticipated the disaster at the Hillcrest mine that fateful morning of June 19, 1914, when an explosion and its aftermath snuffed out the lives of 189 men.

Although the Hillcrest mine had been discovered by Charles Plumber Hill, a United States customs officer, in 1900, it was 1905 before the Hillcrest Coal and Coke Company began operations. Four years later it was sold to a group of Montreal developers who renamed the operation the Hillcrest Collieries Limited. After investigating large sums of money in improving and moderniz-

ing the mine, it was purported to be the best operated and safest mine in the Crowsnest Pass.

Because of over-production the mine had been idle for two days prior to the accident. On June 18, in preparation for the miners returning to work, a committee of three men from the mine-worker's union, Frank Pearson, James Gurtson and George Pounder, inspected the mine and pronounced it to be safe. Fire-boss Daniel Brisboe went on duty at 3 p.m. that same afternoon. Although he found pockets of methane gas and accumulations of coal dust, for which he posted warning signs, he noted that



(Above) A typical coal miner's safety lamp.

(Opposite page) The Hillcrest Cemetery in July, 1990. Here are buried 150 of the victims from the Hillcrest mine disaster of 1914.

(Left) A plan of the surface buildings and the underground tunnels at the Hillcrest mine in 1914.



the ventilation was good and there was plenty of moisture. Brisboe was relieved by fire-boss William Adkin at 11 p.m. Throughout the night Adkin checked for the presence of gas and coal dust. By 6:20 a.m. on the morning of that terrible Friday, Adkin had completed a thorough investigation of the workings. He reported a few small pockets of methane gas, and some small rockfalls, but nothing out of the ordinary.

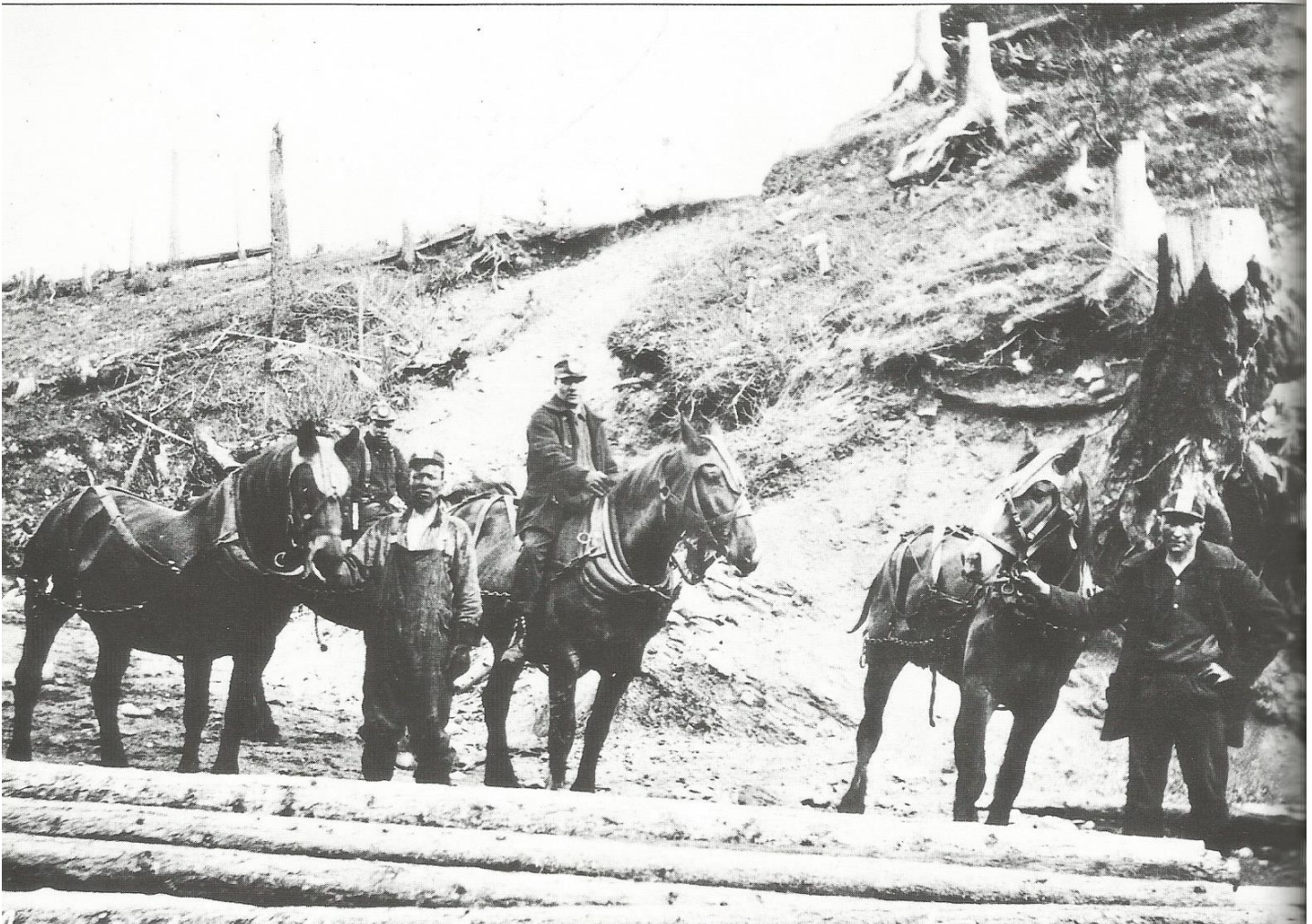
June 19 dawned bright and sunny. With no reason to think it was anything but another working day, the miners made their way from the town of Hillcrest to the lamp-house. Here, each man would pick up their Wolf Safety Lamps and mining equipment. They also picked up two brass tags with their identification number stamped on them. The men then went to the timekeeper's office where they checked in with timekeeper Robert Wood. As they passed through, each man left one of the brass identification tags with the timekeeper. In this manner, it was possible to know every man who was working in the mine. After leaving the timekeeper's office, the miners went underground to resume work at the various coal-

faces. The Hillcrest mine employed 377 men, but on this fateful day, only 235 would be enter the mine. For 189 of those men, it was the last time they would ever see daylight.

The first indication that anything was wrong came about 9:30 a.m. Just as electrical engineer Alex May turned from inspecting one of the huge outside fans that ventilated the mine, he was knocked flat by a tremendous rush of air from behind. Partially stunned, he turned to see a cloud of heavy brown smoke emanating from the air shaft. At the same instant Gen. Mgr. John Brown, who was walking towards his office near the entrance to Mine No. 1, saw the roof of the building that housed the mine hoist collapse as though some great weight had dropped on it. He realized immediately that somewhere deep in the bowels of the mine something, or someone, had set off a tremendous explosion.

Just how devastating the explosion had been was soon brought home to the men working outside the mine. Charles Ironmonger, a 19-year-old rope-rider whose job it was to unhook coal cars from the cable that drew them

Some of the horses used in the mines at Hillcrest, showing the heavy leather pads that protected their heads when underground. This photo was taken in 1919.



from the mine and shunted them onto tracks leading to the tippie, lay dying. He had been thrown 60 feet from the entrance to Mine No. 1 by the blast; a blast so powerful that it crumpled an eight-inch-thick concrete wall in the hoist house and plugged the mine entrance with a jumble of twisted mine track, broken mine cars, fallen rock and timbers. Nor had the entrance to Mine No. 2 been spared. Here the blast had killed the other young rope-rider, 22-year-old Fred Kurigatz, and blown down the hoist house. But miraculously, it left the mine hoist engine and cable intact.

Since the entrance of Mine No. 2 was relatively clear of debris, some of the outside workers, knowing that every second counted, rushed in to help the men underground. They were driven back when they ran into choking carbon dioxide, the poisonous blackdamp that miners feared so much. Despite the gas concentration, three men staggered from the mine entrance. George Wild, Antonio Stella and Arthur Crowther, who had been work-

ing close to the mine mouth, had survived the blast and the gas by nothing short of a miracle.

It was a quarter of an hour before two more survivors, Malcolm Link and Charles Jones emerged from the mine on their own. A little later Jack Maddison, John Moorehouse and John Toth struggled through the debris and dead bodies to safety. Of the 235 miners who had gone down into the mine that morning, 18 eventually reached the surface by themselves; the rest were still below in the gas-filled tunnels. Some were undoubtedly still alive, but if they were not rescued quickly, they would succumb to gas and smoke.

It did not take long for the rescuers to organize, and acts of heroism that day were more the rule than the exception. At the first sound of the explosion and the sight of brown smoke billowing from the entrance, men had rushed from the town. Hillcrest Collieries was actually two mines interconnected below by a labyrinth of tunnels. It had two entrances, but since the entrance to Mine

The No. 1 hoist house at the Hillcrest mine was wrecked by the explosion that ripped through the mine on June 19, 1914.





No. 1 was hopelessly jammed with debris, all efforts were concentrated on clearing the entrance to Mine No. 2.

Royal North-West Mounted Police (RNWMP) Cpls. Frederick Mead and Arthur Grant, and Const. William Hancock, were at Burmis, about three miles away, when word of the tragedy reached them. They responded immediately, but, unfortunately, their initial task was to control the women and children who had rushed to the scene and were pushing and screaming in an attempt to learn if relatives were safe. They were impeding rescue efforts and had to be driven back by the police.

Meanwhile, mine workers, knowing that every second counted, quickly got the hoist engine in operation, cleared the track and piled aboard the first car heading into the mine. Although oxygen masks had not yet arrived, these rescuers, led by Engineer Hutchinson, who only moments before had emerged from the mine half-suffocated from gas, smoke and dust, kept up their search. Ignoring the dead, they hurried those still breathing to the emergency tent hospital set up by Dr. William Dodd near the entrance. At 10 a.m. oxygen masks arrived from Blairmore, along with word that 100 miners from Blairmore were on their way to assist. The oxygen masks were immediately sent underground — and none too soon, for although the ventilation fans had been restart-

ed, some of the rescuers were all but done in by the bad air.

For too many, however, oxygen masks, pulmotors and heroism were too late. Some of those caught near the centre of the explosion were literally torn apart. Others who had tried to save themselves after surviving the initial explosion by dipping their shirts in shallow pools of water, then breathing through them to filter out gas and smoke, were still alive although unconscious. Still others had succumbed to the gas before they could do likewise. At least 30 men, clustered in a group, lay dead, face down in a pool of water. So it went through the mine — some dead, killed outright, some suffocated from gas and smoke, some unconscious, but still breathing — hopefully to be revived when taken to the surface.

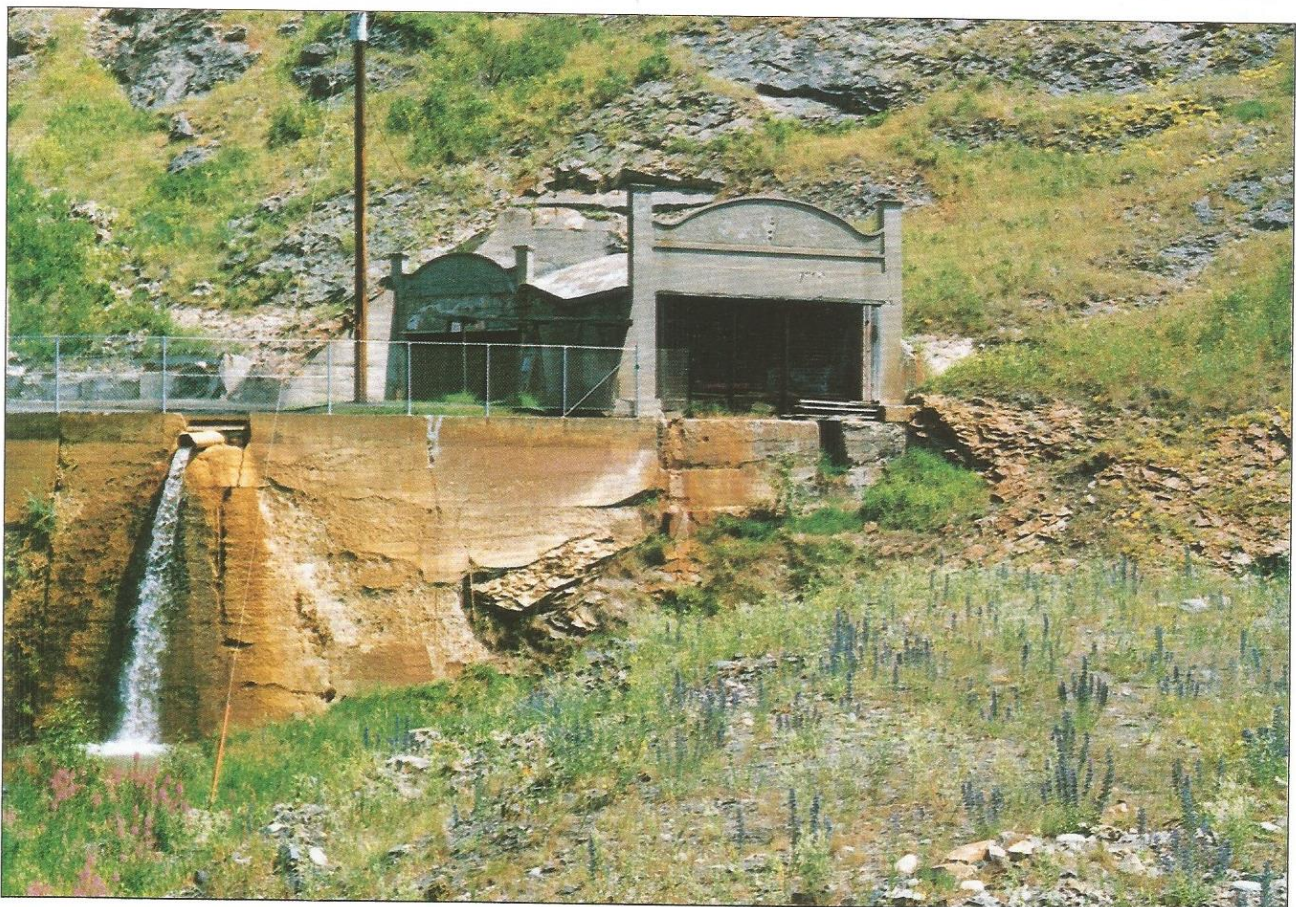
By noon, the grim reality of the disaster was all too apparent. Unfortunately, of the 235 miners who went into the mine that morning, only 46 survived. No words adequately describe a tragedy such as this. For those who waited in vain on the surface there was only numbing, sickening shock.

But the work had to go on. First came the job of bringing out the bodies and identifying them for burial. Later came the task of attempting to find out what went wrong. Initially there was a tendency to blame fire-boss

(Opposite page, top) The mine rescue team that assisted during the Hillcrest mine disaster of 1914.

(Opposite page, bottom) Some of the older buildings in the town of Hillcrest, Alberta, in 1990. Turtle Mountain is visible in the background.

(Below) The Bellevue mine entrance, just off Highway 3 a short distance east of Hillcrest.



Sam Charlton for somehow setting off the explosion. He was the powder man that day, responsible for placing the charges at the coalface that would bring down, or at least loosen up, the first batch of coal the men would have mined that day. It turned out, however, that although Sam had set his charges that morning, he had not detonated them. When rescuers found his body, his firing cable was still wrapped around his waist, the battery lay disconnected several feet away, and the key that he used to turn the switch was still in his pocket. It seemed as though Sam Charlton, sensing something was amiss, had delayed setting off his charges. Either that, or the explosion had taken place before he had time to hook up the wiring and turn the switch.

What had touched off the explosion remains a mystery, although Harry White, a former fire-boss, advanced the theory that a rockfall in one of the tunnels had caused a spark, which had in turn ignited a pocket of methane gas. The gas flame had then jumped from one small pocket to another until, near the coalface, it had hit a pocket of concentrated coal dust which, when dry enough and in the right concentration, is like gunpowder. It was thought that the resulting explosion caused the disaster. Although White was one of the first men to go through the mine from end to end after the blast, his idea was ignored by the board of inquiry. White's theory proved feasible years later when, on September 19, 1926, another terrific explosion tore through the Hillcrest mine. At the time there were only two men, Frank Lote and Fred Jones, in the mine. Both were killed, but neither had been near the spot where the initial explosion took place.

When the last of the survivors were brought to the surface, rescuers began the grim task of bringing out the dead. Efforts were often held up while blocked mine shafts were cleared of jumbled mine timbers, crushed cars and fallen rock. On at least two occasions rescue operations had to be suspended when fires broke out in the shafts far underground and firemen had to be rushed to the scene. Always there was danger of another explosion, but the miners stuck tenaciously to the task until all the dead, some of whom had been dismembered, were brought to the surface.

At 11:30 a.m., RNWMP Insp. Christian Junget had arrived from Pincher Creek to take charge of the police operation. He assigned the grim task of identifying the bodies to Cpls. Mead and Grant. They spent seemingly endless hours in the mine wash-house cleaning bodies, some of them badly disfigured. Constable Hancock was given the even less enviable task of searching the mine for missing arms and legs. Nobody envied their jobs, and despite the fact that the miners' union, the United Mine Workers of America, had no use for policemen in general, and the Mounties in particular, they grudgingly had to admit that this group was doing a magnificent job. For almost a week Grant, Mead and Hancock stuck with the task, eating and sleeping in the wash-house until the job was completed. For their efforts each was later granted an extra \$50 in pay and all were later promoted. While this sum may not seem like much today, it was then the equivalent of about three month's pay.

Surely one of the saddest funerals in the history of the country too place on Sunday, June 21, 1914, when 150 men were placed in three mass graves at the Hillcrest Cemetery. Three others were buried in private ceremonies at Blairmore, while six bodies took the long cross-country ride to their home towns in Nova Scotia and their final resting place. In all, some 130 women were widowed by that terrible blast and 400 children, most of whom were under the age of 10, left without fathers.

It is at times such as these, however, that people show their best. Although Hillcrest Collieries was to pay out \$1,800 to each family in compensation, it takes time to process compensation claims and for most families the need for money was immediate and great. Fortunately for them, a relief committee from Hillcrest was immediately formed and donations of money and food readily made available. Donations from far and wide soon followed. The federal and provincial governments soon forwarded their contribution — \$50,000 from Ottawa and \$20,000 from Edmonton. People in cities and towns across the nation donated to relief funds set up for the sorrowing town, the response being spontaneous and generous. Unfortunately, no amount of money could return even one miner to his grieving family.

When a rescue team found the remains of Joseph Oakley on July 7, 1914, only one man, Sidney Bainbridge, remained unaccounted for. It would be years before Constable Hancock would clear up the mystery of the missing miner. Many of the bodies brought to the wash-house, he explained, were without arms, legs or heads. He, Mead and Grant had done everything possible to reassemble the bodies prior to burial. However, when all was done, there was one leg left over. They assumed that this leg was all that remained of Bainbridge, and had buried it in the coffin with another body.

What of Hillcrest today? As already mentioned, another horrendous blast tore through the mine in 1926. Only two men were killed in that blast, but had it happened a couple of hours later, when the night shift was on duty, the toll could have been 150 more. Despite damage as severe or worse than that caused by the 1914 explosion, the mine was back in operation within a month. It was supposed to be one of the safest mines in the country, yet, twice, devastating blasts ravaged its workings. Nevertheless, it remained a productive mine until its closure in 1939. Shortly after the mine closed, the owners bought an operating mine in nearby Bellevue, and after renaming it "Hillcrest-Mohawk," continued production until the 1950s. By then natural gas and fuel oil had dethroned coal as king of fuels and mines were closing all across the country.

To ensure that no one could enter the mine and injure himself, the mine entrances were permanently closed with well-placed dynamite charges. Mine equipment has been moved away and, although the town of Hillcrest survives, the population has been reduced by almost half.

Only an inordinate large number of markers in the cemetery remain as a grim reminder of that fateful day in 1914 when a terrible explosion snuffed out the lives of 189 men at the Hillcrest mine.

KOOTENAI BROWN

FRONTIERSMAN

Prospector, buffalo hunter, mail carrier with the Pony Express, squaw man, Indian fighter, wolver, whisky trader, Rocky Mountain Ranger, big game guide, scout and packer for the NWMP, soldier, murderer and founder of a park; this was the amazing Kootenai Brown.

JOHN George Brown was born in County Clare, Ireland, on September 13, 1839, the son of an Irish mother and an English father, James Montague Brown. Thanks to a strong-willed grandmother, John was accepted into the British Army and received his commission at the Military College at Sandhurst in 1858. Although some writers have given John Brown an Oxford and Cambridge education, there is no record of this. He did, however, obtain a better than average education from private tutors and his determined grandmother. There are also stories of Brown serving with a Guards Regiment in Queen Victoria's Court, but William Rodney, author of the book *Kootenai Brown*, claims this is pure fabrication.

In late 1858, Brown was posted to India, but not, as some writers claim, for becoming too familiar with some of the Queen's ladies-in-waiting. Again there are stories of Brown's many escapades while in India, including one that has him being given an elephant by a grateful Rajah for some outstanding favour. Another writer claims Brown was forced to flee to South America on a freight ship after quarrelling with and killing a fellow officer. Colourful reading, indeed, but according to author William Rodney, these stories are fiction or embellishments of the facts. In reality, Brown's tenure in India was routine. The mutiny was almost over when his regiment reached Calcutta and in 1860 he returned home to England. After a year in England, he sold his commission, left the army and

embarked on a sailing ship for the goldfields of British Columbia and a completely new way of life.

Brown's travelling companion was Arthur Wellesley Vowell, a man destined to become, among other things, British Columbia's Gold Commissioner. Brown and Vowell were stranded for more than a week in Panama when the ship that was to take them to San Francisco failed to show. Consequently, they were broke when they reached San Francisco and had to work on the docks to raise passage for Victoria.

There they had to work again to raise a grubstake for the Cariboo goldfields. As Brown later wrote: "Chopping poles in the vicinity kept me afloat during my stay of one winter. . . ."

Brown, Vowell and the 5,000 or so hopefuls who headed into the Cariboo in 1863 to find their fortunes, were doomed to disappointment. Although prospecting proved a poor venture, Brown stuck it out for two years. One winter he made \$3,000 by trapping, but lost it the following summer in a shaky mining deal.

In 1864 he had no more to show for his efforts than a host of yarns that probably grew better over the years through countless tellings.

"I had no money when I went into the Cariboo and none when I came out in 1864," he claimed. "But I had a little fortune for awhile in between. . . . When I left Williams Creek I had 50 cents in my pocket; my clothes were in rags; I had no shirt and no socks, but I had a good pair of boots. When I got to Boston Bar, a little village on the Fraser River, I still had 50 cents in my pocket."







(Above) Kootenai Brown tried his luck at gold mining in the Cariboo from 1863-65, but was unsuccessful. Shown here is the Barkerville Hotel and Kelly General Store in Barkerville in 1985.

(Opposite page, top) This painting by Hind illustrates a typical gold panner during the Fraser River and Cariboo gold rushes.

(Opposite page, bottom) After an unsuccessful attempt at gold mining in the Cariboo, Brown headed for Wild Horse Creek in the East Kootenay region of British Columbia, shown here in 1990. There he became a police constable for a short time, but after a reduction in pay he quit, and with four other prospectors, headed for Alberta and new gold prospects.

He was not broke for long, however. Upriver from Boston Bar was a 25-mile-long stretch of wild water. Brown made \$6 a day and board working on boats on this length of the Fraser, but it was brutal work. Often when the men could no longer track the boat — that is, haul it upriver by rope — they had to unload and carry the cargo upstream on their backs. The packers needed the strength of mules, the agility of mountain goats and the tenacity of English bulldogs. Brown decided that this was not the life for him, so when word arrived about a new gold strike at Wild Horse Creek (now Fort Steele) in the East Kootenay, he left to seek his fortune there.

Brown's prospecting efforts at Wild Horse Creek proved to be no better than it had in the Cariboo. Consequently, when he was offered a job as a police constable, he took it. His main claim to fame as a law enforcement officer came when he arrested Joseph Conklin, William Kirby and Ozias Harvey on a charge of passing several thousand dollars worth of bogus gold dust. Brown felt pretty proud of himself, but a month later he quit the police force when he received a reduction in pay.

Brown had another fling at prospecting when he staked a claim with four other miners. However, when they found "it was not panning out very well," they sold out to a company of Chinese for \$500.

"Having disposed of our holdings on the creek," wrote Brown, "the five of us packed through Kootenai Pass and soon after started for Edmonton, where we heard they were mining for gold on the Saskatchewan River. We had no clear idea where Edmonton was and there was no one to tell us."

Not surprisingly, they never reached their destination — at least not as a group. Quite possibly, though, somewhere along the route between Wild Horse Creek and where they emerged from the mountains in the Kootenai Lakes (now Waterton) district, the group had dealings with the Indian tribe from which Kootenai Brown derived his nickname. Since they started with only one horse and arrived in what is now Alberta with five, quite likely

they got the other four from the Kootenai Indians.

When the group emerged from the mountains, they climbed a low ridge where, according to Brown, "The prairies as far as we could see. . . was one living mass of buffalo. Thousands of head there were, far thicker than ever range cattle grazed the bunch grass of the foothills."

As soon as Brown and his companions left the Rocky Mountains they were in the hunting grounds of the fierce Blackfoot tribes. These hostile warriors had allowed very few white men to enter their territory and Kootenai had been warned to be constantly alert for trouble. However, it was not until they had crossed some 250 miles of the plains to Seven Persons Creek, southwest of modern Medicine Hat, that they were attacked.

"We were traveling in a north-easterly direction, believing we were on our way to the goldfields of Edmonton," Brown remembered. "At a clump of cottonwoods we stopped to eat. As we were eating we were surprised by a flight of arrows and we knew our first 'war party' had begun. We thought our time had come. The Indians had no firearms but they were all young bucks — a war party out for anything they could get. . . If the Indians had had guns they would have killed us all."

The white men killed two of the Indians before the others decided to look for easier victims elsewhere. During the skirmish, however, Brown was struck in the back by an arrow. It penetrated so near a kidney that it would have been fatal had he not been able to remove the arrow. His companions then poured turpentine into the wound. Being young and tough, in a week Brown had fully recuperated. Twenty years later, while a scout with the Rocky Mountain Rangers during the Northwest Rebellion, Kootenai revisited the area of the fight. He located the skulls of the two warriors killed there, plus five bullets imbedded in the cottonwoods nearby.

Shortly after their narrow escape the five men split up, three heading to where they thought Fort Edmonton should be while Brown and another man nicknamed "Goldtooth" decided to follow the South Saskatchewan River to wherever it would take them. Since Goldtooth had lost his horse during the Indian raid, he built a boat of buffalo hide stretched over a wooden frame in which he floated down the river, while Brown followed along the bank. They soon lost track of one another, but both eventually ended up at a Metis settlement at Duck Lake in what is now Saskatchewan, where they spent the winter. Brown must have been very impressed with the carefree half-breed plainsmen, for he later joined them as a buffalo hunter and even married a Metis girl. But more of that later. As it was, he and Goldtooth left the Metis settlement early in the spring and travelled to Fort Garry (Winnipeg) by sleigh.

In Manitoba, Brown got his first taste of trading by buying furs from the Cree and Chippewa Indians between Portage La Prairie and the White Mud River during the winter of 1866-67. John Gibbons, the man Brown worked for, used whisky to induce the Indians to trade. Almost invariably the Indians' furs would be traded away before their thirst for booze was satisfied.

When their furs ran out in the middle of one big spree, some of the bolder members of one group of

Indians from Minnesota tried to steal some whisky to keep the party going. An American named Jim Clewett, who also worked for Gibbons, caught them in the act and a shooting battle ensued. Clewett and an Indian were killed and another American named Billy Sammon was badly wounded. Likely Brown and a man named O'Lone would also have been killed had not Brown and Gibbons been able to hold off the angry Indians — some 28 of them — while O'Lone slipped out to a nearby Metis settlement for help.

It was an incident that Kootenai regretted in later years, although it probably did not bother him too much at the time. However, after another season with Gibbons, Brown lost interest in the fur trade. In April of 1868 he headed south to the Dakota Territory and signed on with Major Ruffee's Mail Company at Fort Stevenson at a salary of \$50 a month. His job was to carry the United States Mail from Fort Stevenson through the heart of the Sioux Indian Territory to Fort Benton, Montana.

"There were station keepers every 50 or 60 miles," Brown recalled. "They ran a bigger risk than we did although they weren't paid any more. Most of the station keepers were eventually killed and the company lost hundreds of horses, killed and stolen by the Indians. Their enormous losses finally led the company to bankruptcy and they still owe me \$400 today."

An ordinary man might have given up mail carrying after these experiences, but Brown was no ordinary man. When Ruffee's company failed, the U.S. Army took over the mail route and Brown hired on with them. On May 15, 1868, he and a Sioux half-breed named Joe Martin took the place of two riders, Charley MacDonald and Joe Hamlin, who had been killed by the Sioux somewhere between Forts Stevenson and Totten.

Brown and Martin almost met the same fate. On their first trip they were captured by a Sioux war party led by none other than the soon-to-be famous (or infamous) Chief Sitting Bull who would, in 1876, wipe out Gen. George Custer and his 7th Cavalry at the Battle of the Little Big Horn. It was fortunate for Brown that his partner was part Sioux, otherwise both their scalps might have adorned some Sioux warriors' belts. He and Martin were taken to the Sioux camp where they were stripped naked. However, because Martin was able to convince the warriors that he and Brown were part Sioux, they were not too well guarded. They escaped during the night and made their way on foot back to Fort Stevenson, where they arrived mosquito-bitten and bloody-footed the following afternoon.

"There was a bastion on the fort and one of the sentries saw us coming," Kootenai remembered. "He reported to the sergeant of the guard and he in turn to the officer of the day that two Indians were approaching the fort bare naked. The guard was sent out to capture us but when the sergeant saw who we were he ran out to meet us with, 'What's up? What's up?' I replied, 'Oh, nothing much. The Sioux have your mail, horses and our clothes and came mighty near getting us. We walked in from Strawberry Lake.'"

For five months after this narrow escape Brown took on a storekeeping job. Then, in November, he was back

to carrying the mail. This time Brown took on the added responsibility of supervising the construction of five shelters at approximately 45-mile intervals between Forts Stevenson and Totten. Most of the carriers were Canadian Metis who used dogs to haul the mail during the winter months. The dangers were not nearly so great then, for the Sioux had signed a treaty during the summer. But no treaty could be signed with the weather. Blizzards were frequent on the Dakota plains and in March, 1869, a fierce one caught Brown and four companions Shank, Bittner, Richer and Voyles — on the trail 15 miles from Totten. When they lost the trail the five built a snow shelter and stayed in it overnight. Next day, however, the storm was just as intense and the men decided to head for better shelter, leaving their sleighs behind. On the way they became separated. Brown and Richer struggled back to the sleighs where they waited out the storm. The others were not as lucky. The bodies of Shank and Bittner were eventually located, but Voyles' was never found.

Even after that experience, Brown stayed with the Pony Express until 1874, during which time he met and married a pretty Metis girl, Olive Lyonnais, of French-Canadian and Indian stock. But by then the Dakota Territory was becoming crowded; at least by Kootenai Brown's standards. Settlers were flocking in and it was becoming too tame for him. On June 9, 1874, he packed up his wife and a new baby daughter and headed back to the Canadian prairies to yet another way of life. For the

next couple of years he roamed the plains, following the buffalo with a camp of Canadian half-breeds.

"The half-breed hunting camp was an institution all its own and a law unto itself," Brown wrote of his experience with the Metis buffalo hunters. "They lived in tents in the winter and put up log cabins wherever winter overtook them." The exact location of their hunting territory is hard to pin-point as there were no boundary markers then, but roughly it covered the southeastern part of Alberta and the southwestern sector of Saskatchewan.

It was a carefree life. The Metis were a happy fun-loving people. Every evening when they were not hunting they would gather at someone's tent or cabin for a party or a dance. But the hunts were all business and highly organized. Scouts rode out to locate a big buffalo herd — sometimes a hundred or more miles from camp. Then the whole camp would move and re-locate nearer the big herd. Each hunter had at least two "buffalo runners," fast horses that could outrun the buffalo, while each camp had as many as 4,000 horses — tough cayuses that never saw grain but rustled for themselves summer and winter.

During the hunt the horsemen walked their ponies slowly towards the buffalo in an extended line. Usually the buffalo went on quietly grazing until the hunters were quite close, at which time the buffalo would break into a trot. At a signal from the hunt leader the riders closed up, then at the command, "Equa! Equa!" ("Now! Now!") they spurred their mounts to a full gallop.

"It was some experience," Brown remembered. "Dust

John "Kootenai" Brown's cabin, Waterton Lakes, October 10, 1883. Seated, left to right: A. Stavelly Hill and Kootenai Brown.



flying, horns clashing, buffalo bellowing, men yelling, and all going at top speed."

Men with the best buffalo runners usually made the most kills. Each hunter was responsible for butchering and skinning his kills, after which his wife and children came out with a pony hitched to a two-wheeled cart to haul in the meat. No meat was wasted in a Metis camp. What could not be eaten fresh was either dried or made into pemmican. Father Albert Lacombe, the beloved Roman Catholic priest who spent over 60 years with the Metis and Indians in what is now Alberta, taught them that waste was sin. Apparently, though, the Blackfoot tribes did not share the Metis doctrine. "They were the wasters," Brown claimed. "They killed for the joy of killing, taking only hides and tongues and leaving the rest to rot." With white hunters to the south killing only for the hides, the buffalo were soon on the point of extinction.

Brown, however, believed it inevitable that the buffalo had to go. "We couldn't have settlers and buffalo," he said. "I have heard it said, too, that the United States government offered a reward for killing buffalo. They believed that they could not conquer the Sioux Indians as long as the buffalo roamed the prairies. I am sorry as a lover of sport. . . (and) as a humanitarian that they are gone, but they had to go."

In 1876-77 came a period that Kootenai later regret-



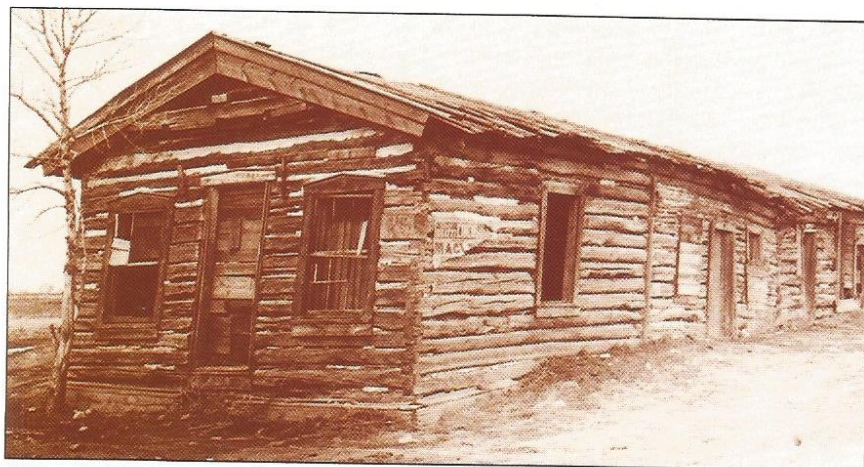
ted. It was an incongruous time for a man who later became a conservationist. The buffalo were becoming scarce so, to make a living, he joined a band of wolvers — white men who killed wolves by poison. Wolf hides were worth \$2.50 each and thousands of the wily animals then roamed the plains. A bottle of strychnine costing perhaps \$6, was enough to poison a large buffalo carcass upon which the unsuspecting wolves fed.

"It was a common thing to get 20 wolves the first morning after the poison had been put out," Brown remembered. One of Brown's partners, Bill Martin, claimed he got 125 wolves in a week, all within 200 yards

of a poisoned buffalo carcass.

Wolvers were a hated group — despised by whites and Indians alike. Perhaps, then, it was inevitable that the trade would lead Brown into trouble. It came in the spring of 1877 at Fort Stewart, Montana, on the Missouri River. After a drinking spree Brown quarrelled with a man named Louis Ell, who apparently tried to cheat him out of the proceeds from some pelts he had sold. Whatever the facts of the matter, the argument led to a fight during which Brown, whose temper was always short, stabbed Ell to death.

Before Brown could escape he was captured by

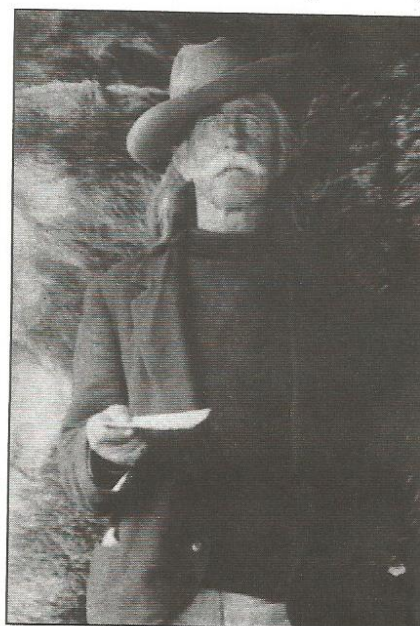


(Above) The home of Fred Kanouse in Fort Macleod, before restoration. The photo below shows the same building in the reconstructed Fort Macleod.

(Right) John "Kootenai" Brown in later years.

(Opposite page, top) John Brown and his second wife Isabella.

(Opposite page, bottom) This painting of Fort Garry, Manitoba, 1872, by W. Frank Lynn, shows the community as it appeared to Kootenai Brown.



Sheriff Rowe of Fort Benton and held for trial. During this incarceration Brown had time to ponder his crime and on July 23, 1877, he tried to commit suicide by stabbing himself in the chest. Fortunately he did not succeed, for he was acquitted by a Territorial Grand Jury at a trial held in Helena in November. "The most beautiful words in the English language are 'Not guilty'," Brown told a friend many years later. It was about the only thing anyone ever heard him say about a period of his life he wanted to forget, but never could.

Following the trial Brown gathered his family and moved to what is now Waterton Lakes National Park, where he built a log cabin beside the Kootenai (now Waterton) Lakes. The wild grandeur of the area had haunted Brown since the time in 1865 when he and his friends emerged from the Kootenai Pass on their way to Fort Edmonton from Wild Horse Creek. While contemplating his future in the Fort Benton jail, Brown had decided that if he was acquitted, he would return to the lakes to live out the rest of his life.

Although a lonely place for Olive, who was used to the conviviality of the Metis hunting camps, for Brown it was ideal. Here he could hunt and fish and do as he pleased, beholden to no man. Nor was earning a living a problem. Game abounded and lakes and streams teemed with fish. If he needed flour, sugar, tea or other staples, he simply sold a wagonload of fish. "I used to sell fish at Macleod," he recalled. "We caught them in the Waterton Lakes and fished both winter and summer. I have seen me get \$75 for my load of fish and we thought that a big price in those days."

Fort Macleod was a bustling town that owed its origin to the North West Mounted Police (NWMP) but, despite its location in southern Alberta, it was primarily an American outpost. Fort Benton merchants I.G. Baker, T.C. Powers and Murphy Neeland were Macleod's biggest businessmen. Bullwhackers, profanely urging long strings of oxen along the Whoop-Up Trail from Fort Benton, brought in most of the merchandise and until the arrival of Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) in 1883, all outgoing mail bore American stamps.

On one of his trips to Fort Macleod, Brown was introduced to H.A. (Fred) Kanouse who had also squatted on land near Kootenai Lakes. The two became friends and decided to go into partnership, starting a store on what later became Brown's first homestead. "Fred and I had a stock valued at \$4,000 and our customers were Indians, mostly Kootenais, Nez Perces and Flatheads from the Flathead Reservation in Montana," Brown recalled.

The Indians were great gamblers and Brown and Kanouse often won back the goods they had just sold. "I was a foot racer and a good shot and in competitions with them on the track and with the rifle I could always beat them," Kootenai boasted. "We had two good horses and in horse racing we also got the best of them. In fact we beat them at every turn."

The Indians grew angrier as time passed and perhaps it was fortunate that the American government finally stopped their Indians from coming into Canada to trade. Otherwise, Brown and Kanouse might well have had a full-blown war on their hands. As it was, trade

slackened and Brown sold out to Kanouse, who moved the business to Fort Macleod. By then Brown had established himself as a big game, fishing and tourist guide. He was attracting all the work he could handle and no longer needed to live dangerously, pitting his wits against several tribes of Indians.

Also by then, Brown was well known to ex-Mounted Policemen C.E.D. Wood and E.T. Saunders, who had recently started the Fort Macleod *Gazette*. Items in their paper like the following, which appeared in the spring of 1883, did much to help Brown's guiding business: "Mr. Brown of Kootenai Lakes brought to town on Saturday a trout weighing 30 pounds. . . Some people may think this is a fishy story, but we have seen the trout and can vouch for its truth."

With the CPR slowly stretching westward, in 1883 Kootenai began getting assignments to guide some prominent people, including the Earl of Latham. Stavely Hill of the Oxley Ranch, who accompanied Lord Latham, wrote of Brown: "He was a wild Indian looking fellow, in a slouch hat and curiously constructed garments. . . He had seen service in the British Army but with his long hair and moccasins had not much of the European remaining in his appearance. . ." Brown was proud of his "wild Indian" appearance and undoubtedly impressed Lord Latham more than if he had turned out on the shores of Kootenai Lakes dressed in tuxedo and top hat.

For the next couple of years Brown continued to get good coverage from the Fort Macleod *Gazette*. The November 14, 1888, issue contained an item alluding to the unseasonably warm weather: "J.G. Brown from Kootenai Lakes was in town last week. Mr. Brown informs us that he rode from the lakes to Macleod, a distance of 50 miles, and that he was uncomfortably warm while trotting along. . ." Next March 21, the *Gazette* reported: "J.G. Brown, who came to town yesterday, nearly lost a horse by drowning in the Kootenai River. . ."

These mundane accounts told of the rather quiet life Brown was then leading. Strangely, there is no mention of the death of his lovely Olive, who passed away sometime between 1883 and 1885. According to Marie Rose Smith, who met Brown after 1885 and later wrote several articles about him, Olive never recuperated after giving birth to a son, Leo, and died while Brown was away on a hunting trip.

Brown was away on another extended hunting trip in 1885 when Maj. L. Crozier of the NWMP, leading a contingent of Mounties and civilian volunteers, tangled with Gabriel Dumont and his Metis army at Duck Lake, Saskatchewan, and the North West Rebellion began. Fort Macleod, Fort Calgary and most other settlements in southern Alberta were in the midst of some 4,000 Blackfoot, Blood, Peigan and Stoney Indians. If they went on the warpath all the whites in the area could be wiped out. Consequently, John Stewart, a former officer with the Princess Louise Dragoon Guards, offered to raise four troops of Rocky Mountain Rangers to patrol the area. The Canadian Army agreed with the idea and when Kootenai Brown returned from his hunt he volunteered. He was accepted along with 114 other plainsmen who were able to ride hard and shoot straight.

The Rangers, with their Western sombreros, buckskin shirts, Cartridge belts and knives, leather chaps and Mexican spurs, were a colourful group. Brown, able to speak many Indian dialects fluently, became a scout. The Rangers patrolled a vast area between the Red Deer River on the north and the American border on the south. Had they been called on to fight, they undoubtedly would have given a good account of themselves. However, only one patrol exchanged shots with hostile Indians, who immediately turned tail for the Montana border.

Brown's services lasted 77 days for which he received \$118.50 in cash and \$80 in scrip, which he exchanged for 320 acres of land next to his original homestead. While with the Rangers somewhere near modern Medicine Hat, Brown met an Indian woman who later became his wife. Some writers have claimed that she was a beautiful princess, daughter of a high ranking chief. In reality she was neither, but she was a faithful companion to Brown, a fine cook and a meticulous housekeeper.

"Oftimes the Browns traveled in the mountains with pack horses," Marie Rose Smith wrote of John and Isabella. "He was an excellent shot and energetic at keeping the pot full. Mrs. Brown was splendid at tanning hides and curing meat. She also was a good shot herself, bringing in many prairie chickens, partridges and ducks."

It was an idyllic life, one that they could have enjoyed for the rest of their days. Unfortunately, fish and game gradually grew scarcer and Brown had to look for another means of earning a living. As it happened, the NWMP began pasturing some of their horses along the nearby Belly River. Brown approached them for a job and was immediately hired.

Brown continued to work for the NWMP off and on for 10 years, sometimes as a guide, sometimes as a trainer for their horses. During this period he began fighting to have his beloved Kootenai Lakes area set aside as a national park. Game was growing ever scarcer and if action was not taken he knew that in a few years it would be too late to save species such as the Rocky Mountain Big Horn sheep, grizzlies and mountain goat. His friends — John Herron who became a Member of Parliament for the Fort Macleod riding, C.E.D. Wood of the *Macleod Gazette*, and F.W. Godsal, a rancher in the Cowley district — shared his feelings. Godsal contacted William Pearce, Superintendent of Mines, who was stationed at Calgary. Finally, on May 30, 1895, after a flood of letters from Pearce and others, the federal government set aside a small tract of land as a forest reserve.

Meanwhile, Brown had to find ways to make a living. He had known for years of the oil seepage along Blakiston (now Cameron) Creek and had used the black liquid to grease his wagon. When oil companies began exploring the area around 1890, Brown teamed with William Aldridge, a Mormon farmer from Cardston, to exploit the seepage. Aldridge and his son Oliver devised a means of collecting the oil in barrels which was then sold to the farmers settling around Cardston for \$1 a gallon. Aldridge and Brown were probably the only ones who did make a little money from the oil as, due to poor roads and primitive drilling equipment, the boom went

bust, although some companies kept trying for the bonanza for many years.

It was not until January of 1901 that Brown's fight for a federal park paid off monetarily, when he was appointed fishery officer for the reserve at a salary of \$50 a year. Meanwhile, he kept fighting for a national park. He did not get his wish then, but in 1908, through his friends, Godsal and Herron, he became game guardian of the Kootenay Reserve, an Alberta government appointment. The next step — a big one — came in March of 1910 when the federal forestry appointed him forest ranger in charge of the Kootenay Forest Reserve. At the age of 71 he started a new career in the Civil Service of Canada.

Kootenai Brown attacked his new job with an enthusiasm that belied his years. To get through the mountain of paperwork faster he asked for — and got — a typewriter. This he mastered through hard work. At the same time he began trying to persuade his superior, Howard Douglas, Commissioner of Parks, to have the Kootenay Forest Reserve enlarged and made into a national park adjoining Glacier National Park in Montana. With pressure coming from Brown, Douglas, Herron and Godsal, the Federal Government finally yielded and, in 1911, Kootenay Forest Reserve became a park. But, by some strange reasoning, it was reduced in size from 54 square miles to 13½ square miles. As a further insult, its name was changed from Kootenay to that of the lakes in the main valley. These lakes were named for Charles Waterton, an 18th century English naturalist, by Lieut. Thomas Blakiston who discovered them in 1858 while with the Palliser Expedition.

Though his territory shrank when it became a national park, Kootenai's workload did not. As acting superintendent he was responsible for rangers, road builders, trail cutters and other staff. His advancing years did not keep him from driving himself and his staff and trying to turn the park into a first-class tourist attraction. In 1914 his dream of a park and game preserve joined to Glacier National Park finally became a reality when the federal government enlarged Waterton to 423 square miles. The park then required a full superintendent but Brown did not get the job. "Ranger Brown cannot exercise proper supervision over the extended area due to extreme age," Chief Superintendent C.B. Hervey advised his superiors after visiting the park and Brown's assistant, Robert Cooper, got the job in his place.

After the demotion — and undoubtedly because of it — notations of failing health began to appear more often in Brown's well-kept diary. In the spring of 1916, after a serious bout of illness, he made his will and bequeathed all his possessions to his faithful Isabella. On July 18 he passed quietly into his final sleep.

But his dream of a great park lives on. In 1932 it became Glacier-Waterton International Peace Park by consent of the Canadian and United States governments; a vast game reserve and mountain playground where the people of two nations intermingle in ever-increasing numbers to admire nature's magnificent wonderland. In it Kootenai Brown lies buried between his two wives in a specially marked grave.

He must be very pleased.



THE PHANTOM TRAIN OF MEDICINE HAT

A true story of a train wreck in which the engineers had been warned in advance. Fate assured that the third warning was in vain.

THE year was 1908, a pretty good year, as years go. Certainly the men working for the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) had little to grumble about, although the winter had been pretty rough: lots of snow to plough. But it was now June and the spring had been good and summer looked even better. Then came the phantom train.

Bob Twohey was engineer and Gus Day the fireman on an engine travelling from Medicine Hat to Dunmore. It was about 11 o'clock at night when the strangest thing happened. As the engine proceeded towards Dunmore, where they were to couple up with the Spokane Flyer, a train appeared before them, approaching on the single line that wound around the cutbanks before climbing a steep grade from the valley to the tableland of prairie.

Twohey and Day were not expecting any trains coming toward them and common sense dictated that this was not happening. Their job was to take the engine to Dunmore and pick up the Flyer. The Flyer did not enter Medicine Hat and there were no other scheduled trains at that time.

"The headlight of the approaching train seemed to be about the size of a wagon wheel," engineer Day told Andrew Staysko later. (Staysko retired in 1955 after 48 years of service with the CPR.) "The reflection ahead was as though the firebox was open on the locomotive," Day said.

He shouted to fireman Twohey and made for the gangplank to jump. Twohey reached instinctively for the brake valve, but his hand stopped in mid-air as the approaching train whistled a warning signal for the curve around which Twohey and Day's engine had just come.

Day was stunned as he stood at the doorway of the cab. Twohey was similarly immobile. His hand remained suspended over the brake valve. As they stood there in silence, their engine still moving, a string of phantom coaches sped past them on non-existent tracks!

"The coach windows were lighted and crew members waved a greeting from places where crew members would be expected to be found waving greetings as trains pass one another," Staysko recounted.

Then the phantom train disappeared.

Twohey and Day looked at one another in silent

bewilderment, then went about their jobs of getting the engine into Dunmore and coupling up to the Spokane Flyer. Each was fearful of what the other might have thought had they expressed their feelings. They reached Dunmore, coupled to the Flyer and the night ended without further incidents.

Two weeks went by before the engineer and fireman met on a street in Medicine Hat. Feeling safer with the passage of time since the incident, they found the courage to talk about what had happened on that strange night. They admitted that they were thankful to learn that what had happened had at least been shared by both. But it certainly left them with an eerie feeling.

It worried Twohey in an additional way. He told Day that he had been to a fortune teller in the city. The seer told him he would die within a month. Since he was in good health, this bit of candid news was disconcerting, to say the least.

"I'm going to lay off for a couple of trips," Twohey told Day. There was no sense in tempting fate. Day agreed, although he decided to stay on the job.

A few nights passed. Nothing untoward happened. Then one night Day was on the same engine, quietly going about his duties, when he was suddenly jolted to rigid attention by a gasp from J. Nicholson, the engineer who replaced Twohey when he booked off sick.

"What the hell's that?" Nicholson yelled.

They were at exactly the same spot where the phantom train had appeared a few weeks before. Once again a train was coming straight at them, whistle blowing and headlight gleaming like a beacon in the pitch blackness. At a crucial moment, as before, the train seemed to veer onto a separate track and pass them. Again crew members waved greetings from their respective positions in the engine and cars. The two men were stunned to silence as they continued to Dunmore to complete their shifts. The phantom train had once again vanished into the dark toward Medicine Hat.

When Gus Day reported for duty on the morning of July 8, 1908, he was assigned to yard duty. Fireman H. Thompson took his place on the engine that was to make a morning trip to Dunmore to pick up the Spokane Flyer. This time the job was to take the Flyer east to Swift

Current. With engineer J. Nicholson at the controls, the train pulled out of Medicine Hat and headed into the hills.

For the first two miles out of Medicine Hat, the trip was uneventful. But as they approached the spot where the phantom train had been seen on two separate occasions, another train appeared. This time it was broad daylight — and the train was real!

Passenger train 514 was barreling in from Lethbridge. With brakes screeching on the in-bound passenger train and the single engine heading for Dunmore, the inevitable resulted: a terrible, grinding collision.

When the smoke had cleared and rescue teams had reached the scene, the tragic toll was taken. Both engineers were killed, one on each engine. A fireman named Gray and a conductor named Mallet, both on the Lethbridge train, were killed, as were seven passengers on that fateful journey.

Thompson, the fireman on the outbound engine, escaped by jumping at the last moment. He recalled later that just before the crash he had seen a farmer standing

on a hill, waving his arms. Apparently the farmer could see both the engine and the passenger train as they headed towards each other on the single track and realized that a crash was coming. He tried to warn the engine, but the gesture had been misinterpreted as a friendly salute.

The warning by the farmer was the third to be given: two "phantom" warnings, and one that was extremely real. Tragically, all were ignored. Fireman Day was the luckiest man alive that morning. He was firing up an engine in the yard, back at Medicine Hat, when news of the wreck reached him. Engineer Nicholson was not as lucky. He was in charge of that engine on its way to Dunmore. He had seen the phantom.

Even stranger is the fact that the engineer on the incoming passenger train had also seen the phantom. He was Bob Twohey, who had overcome his fear of the phantom train and had gone back to work. Unfortunately for him, he had been picked to drive the engine of the train that followed the phantom train route to Medicine Hat!

The phantom train of Medicine Hat that became a reality when a collision one clear summer morning occurred west of Medicine Hat, Alberta.



I N D E X

- Adams, John 41.
 Adkin, William 96.
 Akers, Dave 36.
Alberta 73.
 Allard, Charles 20.
 Allard, Joseph 20.
 Alloway, Charlie 17.
 Antrobus, W.D. 36.
 Arkoff, George 79.
Assiniboia 75.
 Attin, Jimmy 79.
 Awcock, Clifford 20.
 Aylwin, F.D. 49.
 Ayotte, Alex 20.
 Bailey, F.W.E. 79.
 Bainbridge, Sidney 100.
 Baker, I.G. 108.
 Bankhead 69.
Baroness 72, 73.
 Barr, Dave 92.
 Basoff, Tom 79.
 Bavin, E.W. 78, 80.
 Bedson, Sam 17, 20.
 Bellevue 93, 100.
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 Big Leg 4.
 Black Eagle 4.
 Bond, Orlando 13.
 Bone, Peter 48, 54.
 Bredin, W.F. 84.
 Brisboe, David 94, 96.
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 Burmis 99.
 Button Chief 4.
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 Carson, Kit 30.
 Chadron, Francis 30.
 Chambers, Ted 85, 88, 89, 90, 92.
 Chapman, Joe 60.
 Charlton, Sam 100.
 Ching, Sam 63.
 Choquette, Sid 60.
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 Clarke, Pearl 45.
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 Drummond, William 13.
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